### When to Start Hormonal Methods

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>After monthly bleeding begins</th>
<th>Breastfeeding</th>
<th>After child-birth, not breastfeeding</th>
<th>Switching methods</th>
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<tr>
<td>COCs</td>
<td>In first 5 days</td>
<td>At 6 months*</td>
<td>In 3rd week</td>
<td>At once, if previous method was used correctly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monthly injectables</td>
<td>In first 7 days</td>
<td>At 6 weeks</td>
<td>Anytime up to 4 weeks</td>
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<td>Long-acting injectables, implants</td>
<td>In first 7 days</td>
<td>At 6 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>POPs</td>
<td>In first 5 days</td>
<td>At 6 weeks</td>
<td>Anytime up to 4 weeks</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Also can start a hormonal method at any of these times:

- She has not had sex since her last monthly bleeding or delivery
- She had a baby in the last 6 months, with no monthly bleeding since then, and she is fully or nearly fully breastfeeding
- She had a miscarriage or abortion in the past 7 days

*For monthly injectables, at 6 weeks

### Comparing Effectiveness

<table>
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<td>Progestin-only pills (POPs)</td>
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<td>Withdrawal</td>
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<td>Spemacide</td>
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### Correcting Mistakes

**WHEN A WOMAN HAS MISSED COCs:**

Key concept: Going a number of days without hormonal pills increases risk of pregnancy. So greatest risk comes from lengthening the hormone-free week between cycles.

Tell her what she should do:

- If you miss any hormonal pills, always take a pill as soon as you remember. Keep taking one each day.
- If you miss 1 or 2 pills, this is all you need to do.
- Start each new pack on time—even if you missed some of the last 7 pills in a 28-pill pack.
- If you miss 3+ pills (among the first 21 pills) or if you start a pack 3 days late or more: Start taking pills again.
- Also use condoms or avoid sex for next 7 days.
- And if you miss the 3 or more pills in the 3rd week of the pack: Start pills again. Use condoms or avoid sex for 7 days.
- Also start new pack on next day after 3rd week of pills. (Throw away any 4th-week pills.)

**LATE INJECTION RULES:**

*If partially breastfeeding, at 6 weeks

**EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILLS:**

- Take as soon as possible within 5 days after unprotected intercourse.
- Dose: If available, 1.5 mg levonorgestrel in one dose (dedicated product, or 40 or 50 POPs). Or with COCs, 0.5 mg levonorgestrel + 0.1 mg ethinyl estradiol; repeat 12 hours later.

### Managing Common Side Effects

**Usually, reassurance is enough:** Side effects are not dangerous. They often stop on their own.

- No monthly bleeding: Reassure. No need to treat. Not a sign of pregnancy if using method correctly.
- Minor headache, tender breasts: Try common pain relievers. (If migraine headache, see handbook for guidance.)
- Irregular or heavy bleeding: For modest, short-term relief, try a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), such as ibuprofen 800 mg 3 times a day for 5 days. Do not skip COCs or POPs.
- Upset stomach with COCs or POPs: Take pills at bedtime or with food.