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**Estrogen and progestrins**

Oral contraceptives (birth-control pills) are used to prevent pregnancy. Estrogen and progestin are two female sex hormones. Combinations of estrogen and progestin work by preventing ovulation (the release of eggs from the ovaries). They also change the lining of the uterus (womb) to prevent pregnancy from developing and change the mucus at the cervix (opening of the uterus) to prevent sperm (male reproductive cells) from entering. Oral contraceptives are a very effective method of birth control, but they do not prevent the spread of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV, the virus that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome [AIDS]) and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Combinations of estrogen and progestin are used to treat certain symptoms of menopause. Estrogen and progestin are two female sex hormones. Hormone replacement therapy works by replacing estrogen hormone that is no longer being made by the body. Estrogen reduces feelings of warmth in the upper body and periods of sweating and heat (hot flashes), vaginal symptoms (itching, burning, and dryness) and difficulty with urination, but it does not relieve other symptoms of menopause such as nervousness or depression. Estrogen also prevents thinning of the bones (osteoporosis) in menopausal women. Progestin is added to estrogen in hormone replacement therapy to reduce the risk of uterine cancer in women who still have their uterus.

Hormone replacement therapy comes as a tablet to take by mouth. It is usually taken once a day. To help you remember to take hormone replacement therapy, take it around the same time every day. Follow the directions on your prescription label carefully, and ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain any part you do not understand. Take this medication exactly as directed. Do not take more or less of it or take it more often than prescribed by your doctor. Do not stop taking this medication without talking to your doctor.

### Hormone replacement therapy may cause side effects. Tell your doctor if any of these symptoms are severe or do not go away:

* headache
* upset stomach
* vomiting
* stomach cramps or bloating
* diarrhea
* appetite and weight changes
* changes in sex drive or ability
* nervousness
* brown or black skin patches
* acne
* swelling of hands, feet, or lower legs (fluid retention)
* bleeding or spotting between menstrual periods
* changes in menstrual flow
* breast tenderness, enlargement, or discharge
* difficulty wearing contact lenses

### Some side effects can be serious. The following symptoms are uncommon, but if you experience any of them or those listed in the IMPORTANT WARNING section, call your doctor immediately:

* double vision
* severe abdominal pain
* yellowing of the skin or eyes
* severe mental depression
* unusual bleeding
* loss of appetite
* rash

**antifertility drugs**

Antifertility drugs are actually synthetic hormones. When progesterone pills are taken, the mucus in the cervix gets thickened. This makes it very difficult for sperm to enter the uterus and fertilize the egg and hence chances of pregnancy are reduced. Progesterone is a hormone which suppresses ovulation in women. The synthetic progesterone derivatives are more potent as compared to natural progesterone. Norethindrone is an example of synthetic progesterone which is one of the most commonly used antifertility drugs. Ethynylestradiol is a combination of derivatives of estrogen and progesterone.

**Benefits of Antifertility Drugs**

These drugs generally do not have many side effects, weight gain is the only issue known to be reported. These drugs are very useful if taken in the proper dose, following are its significant benefits:

1. They cause no interference in sexual activities and risk of pregnancy is reduced.
2. They might cause the reduction in menstrual bleeding.
3. They can be taken immediately after childbirth.

These drugs should not be taken without the consultation of a doctor. The cycle of the medicine should be maintained. The chance of cancer in the uterus is reduced if the pills are taken in long-term dose. They also provide protection against pelvic inflammatory diseases. Progesterone acts as an anti-inflammatory drug and regulates the immune system.