

Continuous Use of Birth Control Pills and Vaginal Rings

By: Dr. Kim McCulloch

New studies have been released showing us that continuous use of birth control pills is actually safer and better for our bodies than taking a 7 day break off the pills every month! Some women are nervous to NOT have a period every month, but it is very healthy for us if we are adjusting the hormones to prevent a monthly cycle. In fact, you are less likely to get pregnant, have mood swings or pelvic pain, feel bloated and have headaches if you do continuous dosing as I will describe below. Also, birth control pills decrease your lifetime risk of ovarian and uterine cancer- so there are many benefits to birth control pills!

Instructions for continuous use of birth control pills:

Start the pack as you normally would and take all the pills for the 1st 3 weeks. Most pill packs will then have a week of sugar pills, during which time you would normally have your period. Throw those sugar pills away and start your next pack the next day. Take the next 3 weeks of pills every day- never miss a pill.

Now you have 2 options. Some people want a period that is somewhat predictable. At this point, you can take a 3 DAY break from the pills and you will start your period. It should be light and short. After 3 days, start back up on a new pack of pills and return to this same cycle. This way you will have a period every 6 weeks. The other option is to just continue to take the pills continuously until you have spotting, then you stop taking your pills for 3 days, have a period and resume the pills after the 3 days right where you left off in your pack. It is a little less predictable, but you may be able to go 4-6 months without a period, which is a great thing!! You must take at least 3 weeks of pills between 3 day breaks even if you are spotting though- if you don't your chances of pregnancy increase significantly. The breakthrough bleeding gets better the longer you are taking your pills continuously, so be patient.

If you are using the Nuva ring you can do basically the same thing. Use a ring for 4 weeks then take it out and put a new one in immediately. After 2 months, you can have a 3 day break before putting a new ring in or you can wait until you bleed, then take the ring out for 3 days (wrap it in saran wrap and put it in the refrigerator) and then put it back in. It is good for no longer than 4 weeks total. If you have some spotting, you can also try changing the ring every 3 weeks instead of 4 weeks and see if that decreases your spotting. Again, the first few months you may spot every month and need to have a short period. It will get better if you stick with this plan.

If you have any questions about your birth control pills please call our office at 716-1920 and we will be happy to walk through this with you.