

Choosing a combined oral contraceptive pill

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This activity was developed by Australian Prescriber based on the content of the article, which can be read in full at www.australianprescriber.com/magazine/38/1/6/11

SUMMARY

The combined oral contraceptive pill is an effective contraceptive method which can also offer other benefits. However, other contraceptive options should be discussed. If the pill is the chosen method, prescribe a pill with the lowest effective dose of oestrogen and progestogen.

Pills containing levonorgestrel or norethisterone in combination with ethinylloestradiol 35 microgram or less are considered first-line. They are effective if taken correctly, have a relatively low risk of venous thromboembolism, and are listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

The pill is usually taken in a monthly cycle. Some women may prefer an extended pill regimen with fewer or no inactive pills.

Learning Objectives

1. Know the hormones contained in combined oral contraceptive pills
2. Identify harmful effects associated with the combined oral contraceptive pill

Pharmacist Competency Standards

- 4.2 Consider the appropriateness of prescribed medicines
- 7.2 Provide ongoing medication management

These standards are in National Competency Standards Framework for Pharmacists in Australia 2010.

Questions

Visit <http://sgjz.mobi/s3/Choosing-a-combined-oral-contraceptive-pill> to complete this activity

1. In a combined oral contraceptive pill, which of the following hormones has a lower risk of venous thromboembolism?

- a) desogestrel
- b) drospirenone
- c) gestodene
- d) levonorgestrel

2. Which of the following symptoms is unlikely to respond to reducing the dose of oestrogen in a combined oral contraceptive pill?

- a) bloating and fluid retention

This CPD activity should take around one hour to complete. It can be included in a pharmacist's CPD plan for two Group 2 non-accredited CPD credits. Pharmacists should self-record this activity.

To complete this Group 2 activity, you should read the article and complete the online quiz. The questions are based on the content of the article.

The correct responses will be forwarded to the email address you provide, with proof of your participation, when you electronically submit answers to the questions. There will also be space to reflect on your responses and what you have learned through this activity.

(Note that Australian Prescriber CPD activities are not accredited by the Australian Pharmacy Council.)

- b) breakthrough bleeding
- c) breast tenderness
- d) headache
- e) nausea

3. Which of the following hormones used in the combined oral contraceptive pill is an oestrogen?

- a) cyproterone
- b) desogestrel
- c) gestodene
- d) mestranol
- e) nomegestrol

4. True or false?

- a) A pill containing a combination of ethinylloestradiol and drospirenone may reduce premenstrual symptoms
- b) It is unsafe to take a monophasic combined oral contraceptive pill continuously for three months
- c) Triphasic oral contraceptive pills have significant advantages over monophasic regimens
- d) Quadraphasic contraceptive pills are recommended for women with heavy menstrual bleeding
- e) The combined oral contraceptive pill is not recommended for use by women who are breastfeeding
- f) Only combined oral contraceptive pills containing cyproterone acetate improve acne
- g) The combined oral contraceptive pill is contraindicated in women who have migraine with aura

Answers will be provided via email on completion of the activity at the link above.

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