



*The Orthodox Natural
Family Planning Association*

TEN REASONS TO AVOID BIRTH CONTROL PILLS

- 1 Birth control pills can at times prevent pregnancy by altering the lining of the uterus.** This occurs when breakthrough ovulation takes place, in approximately 2-15% of a woman's cycles. Birth control pills can prevent implantation of an already existing embryo. This means that birth control pills sometimes cause very early abortions.
- 2 The estrogen in birth control pills may promote breast cancer, especially if used for a prolonged period.** Numerous studies of breast cancer have shown that long durations of estrogen stimulation and high dosages of estrogen increase breast cancer. High dosages of estrogen are required to prevent ovulation, the main purpose of birth control pills. Even low-dose pills have double or triple the average amount of estrogen naturally present in a woman's cycle. The US Department of Health and Human Services placed the ethinyl estradiol in birth control pills on its official list of human carcinogens in December, 2002.
- 3 The potent artificial estrogen in birth control pills, ethinyl estradiol, comes only in a one-size-fits-all dose.** If estrogen is needed for therapeutic, non-contraceptive reasons, the bio-identical estrogens estradiol and estriol can be given in a range of doses tailored to a woman's individual needs. The smallest necessary dose given during the part of the cycle in which a woman is deficient in estrogen can give the benefits of estrogen therapy with a lower risk of serious health consequences, as well as fewer side effects of excess estrogen such as breast tenderness, bloating and weight gain. Estriol is the least carcinogenic estrogen.
- 4 Progestin, the second artificial hormone in birth control pills, can have serious cardiovascular effects.** The second-generation progestins gestodyne, desogestrel, and norgestimate are associated with an increased incidence of deep-vein thrombosis (DVT). The 3-5% of Caucasian women who carry a particular gene for blood clotting (factor V Leiden mutation) have a 30-50 fold risk of DVT with these preparations. Levonorgestrel and norethindrone, the first-generation progestins derived from testosterone, increase LDL (bad cholesterol) and decrease HDL (good cholesterol). Unlike these artificial hormones, the use of natural progesterone during the luteal phase (last half) of the menstrual cycle can help eliminate abnormal bleeding, as well as improve PMS and sleep, without the serious cardiovascular risks.

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Birth control pills can have long-lasting effects on fertility, even after being discontinued. The main mechanism by which birth control pills prevent pregnancy is the suppression of ovulation. Although for many women suppression of ovulation reverses within a few months, there is a substantial percentage of women—especially those with underlying hormonal problems and who are put on the pill to control bleeding—whose cycles and hormones are impaired for many months and even years after oral contraceptives. One percent of women who use oral contraceptives will *never* ovulate again without using fertility drugs to induce ovulation. In addition, research by Dr. Eric Odeblad of Sweden has shown *permanent* impairment of cervical mucus production, which is vital to achieving pregnancy, in women who have used birth control pills. The ranks of women in their thirties experiencing infertility includes a very large percentage who used oral contraceptives to control their fertility in their teens and twenties. For women who wish to become pregnant in the future, there are much safer methods of fertility control which do not have permanent, adverse effects on childbearing ability.

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Birth control pills promote cervical intraepithelial neoplasia (CIN) and are a risk factor for cervical cancer. The high dose of estrogens in pills cause a larger transformation zone in the cervix, where cell mutations take place. This is an effect independent of and in addition to the other CIN risk factors of HPV (genital wart virus) and multiple sexual partners.

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Birth control pills can cause other serious medical problems. Glucose intolerance, gall bladder disease and hepatocellular adenoma, and cervical cancer are all promoted by oral contraceptive use.

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Birth control pills can cause minor health problems and side effects. Weight gain, depression, and diminished sex drive have all been associated with oral contraceptive use.

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Safer and better ways exist for women to prevent pregnancy. Non-hormonal methods of fertility control have long been considered the safest methods of fertility control. Modern Natural Family Planning methods have a 97–99% effectiveness rate for preventing pregnancy, and have the additional benefit of obtaining valuable information on a woman's own estrogen and progesterone levels from monitoring biomarkers during the menstrual cycle.

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Birth control pills facilitate unhealthy patterns of sexual behavior, which are frequently physically and emotionally damaging to both men and women. Birth control pills were developed in a deliberate effort to separate sexuality from reproduction. There is a consensus, even among persons and institutions promoting the use of oral contraceptives, that there was a close association between widespread use of oral contraceptives and the “sexual revolution” that began in the 1960s. Birth control pills facilitate uncommitted sexual relationships. The impact of widespread use of oral contraceptive use on the culture has been an unprecedented rise in divorce, non-marital sexual activity, and sexually transmitted diseases, along with a decline in stable marriages and families.

Learn about Natural Family Planning from an Orthodox Christian perspective at www.orthodoxnfp.org

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