



**PHARMACIE
PIERRE-MARC GERVAIS**

3421, avenue du Parc, Montréal QC H2X 2H6
Tél. : 514 788-3656 • Fax : 514 788-3657

OOPS! I forgot my pill!

What to do if you forget to take an oral contraceptive

The first part relates only to combined oral contraceptives. This excludes other means of contraception as Micronor™, Nuvaring™, Depo-Provera™, Evra™ and Mirena™.

A combined oral contraceptive is a contraceptive which is taken orally and has estrogen (ethinyl estradiol) and a progestin. These tablets are available under different brand names, such as Alesse™, Portia™, Aviane™, Marvelon™, Linessa™, Cyclen™, Tri-Cyclen™, Triquilar™, Brevicon™, Demulen™, Yasmin™, Seasonale™, Minestrin™, Loestrin™, Min-Ovral™, Ortho™, Select™, Ovral™, Synphasic™, Tri-Cyclen LO™.

These contraceptives are usually provided in a blister or a wheel of 21 tablets. 7 inactive pills (placebos) are sometimes present. This is what distinguishes 21 day packages (eg Alesse™ 21) from 28 day packages (Alesse™ 28). The placebo tablets are used primarily to help you maintain a routine. They are usually green.

To determine how to proceed, we must distinguish between 3 possible scenarios.

The first scenario is an omission of one tablet for less than 24 hours, no matter what week you are in. An example of this scenario: Claire takes her pill in the evening after brushing her teeth. One morning, while brushing her teeth before going to school, she realizes she has forgotten to take her pill the night before.

The second scenario is an omission of one active tablet or more for 24 hours or more during the first week after the period without hormones or if the period without hormones is longer than 7 days. An example of this scenario: Isabelle takes her pill after waking up with her alarm clock. She began her new package on Friday. She woke up Monday morning and she realized that she did not take her pill yesterday since Sunday she slept over at a friend's place. It has been over 24 hours that Isabelle forgot her pills. Another example: Daisy usually resumes her pills on Sunday. However, her plane returning from Cuba is delayed due to bad weather. She will therefore start her new package of pills on Tuesday instead of Sunday. Her hormone-free period is longer than 7 days.

The third scenario is an omission of one active tablet or more during the 2nd or 3rd week of a package for 24 hours or more. An example here: Julia is in the second week of her package of contraceptives. Following the initiations at the university, she realizes she has forgotten to take her pills for 3 days!

According to the scenario concerning you, you will have to proceed differently. If you're not sure, please contact your pharmacist or doctor.



PHARMACIE
PIERRE-MARC GERVAIS

3421, avenue du Parc, Montréal QC H2X 2H6
Tél. : 514 788-3656 • Fax : 514 788-3657

Here's what to do for scenario # 1

Missed one active tablet for LESS than 24 hours - regardless of the week

What to do:

Take 1 active tablet as soon as possible and continue to take 1 tablet per day until the end of the package.

This means it is possible that you take two tablets a day. However, this does not mean to take 2 tablets at the same time.

In the case of Claire, as she realized the next morning that she had forgotten to take her pill the night before, her omission is less than 24 hours. She should therefore take 1 active tablet in the morning and another 1 while brushing her teeth at night as usual. The effectiveness of the contraceptives is not compromised.

Here's what to do for scenario # 2

Missed an active pill or more for 24 hours or more during the first week after the period without hormones or hormone-free period of more than 7 days

What to do:

Take 1 active tablet as soon as possible and continue to take 1 tablet per day until the end of the package

Use an extra contraceptive method for 7 days

Emergency oral contraception can be justified. Contact your pharmacist or doctor.

In the case of Isabelle, after waking up Monday morning, she will take 1 pill. She should use a condom with her sexual partner for 7 days, since contraceptive effectiveness is potentially compromised. She will continue to take 1 tablet a day. If Isabelle has had unprotected sex within 5 days before the omission, she will have to see her pharmacist or doctor for a prescription for emergency oral contraception if it is justified (morning-after pill).

In the case of Daisy, she will begin her contraceptives on Tuesday instead of Sunday. She will continue to take 1 tablet per day until the end of her package. She will however use a barrier method of contraception (such as condoms) for at least 7 days. If Daisy has had unprotected sex within 5 days preceding the resumption of contraception, she can see her pharmacist or doctor for a prescription for emergency oral contraception if it is justified. (morning-after pill).

Here's what to do for scenario # 3

Forgot 1 tablet or more (for 24 hours or more) during the 2nd or 3rd week of the package

What to do:

If 2 or less tablets have been forgotten:

-- Take 1 active tablet as soon as possible

-- Continue 1 tablet per day until the end of package



**PHARMACIE
PIERRE-MARC GERVAIS**

3421, avenue du Parc, Montréal QC H2X 2H6
Tél. : 514 788-3656 • Fax : 514 788-3657

- DO NOT DO A PERIOD OF TIME WITHOUT HORMONES (do not take placebos if you have a package of 28 days or start again immediately after a new package if you have a package of 21 days – you will probably not have your periods)
- Repeat a new package and finish it

If 3 or more tablets have been forgotten:

- Take 1 active tablet as soon as possible
- Continue to take 1 tablet per day until the end
- DO NOT DO A PERIOD OF TIME WITHOUT HORMONES
- Repeat a new package at the end of the current package
- USE ANOTHER WAY OF CONTRACEPTION FOR 7 DAYS
- Emergency oral contraception can be justified. Ask your pharmacist or your doctor.

In the case of Julia, she forgot 3 of her contraceptive pills during the 2nd week, so she will take 1 tablet as soon as possible. She will finish the package she has. At the end of the active pills, she should immediately restart a new package of pills. It is important that she uses an additional mean of contraception for 7 days (such as condoms). If Julia has had unprotected sex within 5 days, emergency oral contraception (morning-after pill) might be necessary to prevent an unplanned pregnancy. She should ask her pharmacist or her doctor.

Some tips to help not to forget its contraceptive

- Try to link the gesture of taking a contraceptive to a routine activity like brushing your teeth, combing your hair, drinking your morning coffee, with the alarm clock...
- Remember that it is important to take the contraceptive every day to make it effective
- If you often forget to take your contraceptive, there are other contraceptive options available to you such as the patch, the vaginal ring, the Depo-Provera™ injection or IUDs.

The information contained in this document is presented as informative. It does not replace the judgement of an expert. Please contact your pharmacist or doctor if you have any questions. And remember, oral contraceptives do not protect against sexually transmitted infections (chlamydia, hepatitis, HIV / AIDS, gonorrhoea, condylome, herpes, syphilis and others).

Prepared by Pierre-Marc Gervais, pharmacist
Last update: March 20th 2009

This information is given you by

Pharmacie Pierre-Marc Gervais
3421 avenue du Parc
Montréal (Québec) H2X 2H6
T.514.788.3656 F.514.788.3657

Open Monday to Friday 9AM to 9PM and Saturday to Sunday from 9AM to 5PM
Pharmacie Pierre-Marc Gervais – your health prescription!

<http://pharmaciegervais.ca>