

Skipping Periods on Birth Control

Do women on birth control need to have a period? The short answer is: no.

Most hormonal birth control products have 3 weeks of hormones and 1 week of no hormones. The period that happens during the hormone-free week is called withdrawal bleeding. It's a false period, and it's not needed for good health. By skipping the hormone free interval you can avoid heavy bleeding. **Skipping periods on birth control is safe.**

You can skip a period from time to time – for instance, during a vacation.

You can skip every period. This can help problems related to periods (like migraines, PMS, anemia, etc.).

We do not recommend skipping periods until you have been on the birth control for 6 months.

If you don't want a period, just skip that hormone-free week. Here's how:

Pill users: Most pill packs contain 21 active pills (with hormones) and 7 placebo pills (with no hormones). The placebo pills are the last few pills in the pack. To skip a period, don't take the placebo pills. Instead, go straight from the last active pill in one pack to the first active pill in the next pack.

A woman who uses 28-day packs and skips the last 7 pills of each pack will need to buy 17 packs each year. Check with your insurance plan to be sure it will cover cost of the extra packs.

Some pill packs contain 84 active pills and 7 placebo pills. To avoid having a period, you can skip the last 7 pills. Using these 3-month packs may cost less, depending upon your insurance plan.

Patch users: Skip the patch-free week. To save money, you can change the patch every 9 days rather than weekly. This means that you'll use a box of 3 patches every 27 days. (The patch has more hormone than the pill or the ring. It's fine to skip a period from time to time. If you want to skip all periods, you may want to switch to the ring or pill.)

Ring users: Skip the ring-free week. You can change the ring every 30-31 days. (Many women find it easier to change the ring on the **same date of each month.**)

Possible Side effects or disadvantages of skipping your period

- You may have breakthrough bleeding or spotting in the first few months.
 - Blood from spotting may be dark brown from being in the uterus longer.
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What to do about break-through bleeding/spotting

Take 2 Aleve tablets (with food) every 12 hours for 3-5 days.

If Aleve does not help and you have been using active hormones for at 21 consecutive days

1. Take 3 days "off" (no pills, no patch or remove the ring) to allow your menstrual period to occur.
 2. Restart taking the pill, place a new patch or insert a new ring.
 3. Continue active hormone birth control for a minimum of 21 days.
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When to call your medical health provider

If bleeding is extremely heavy or if bleeding continues after trying the above options.