

## 6 Things You Need to Know About the Pill

Whether you're on the Pill and thinking of going off it to get pregnant or you're already a mom who's considering this form of birth control, here are six things you should know about the Pill.

**THE PILL PREVENTS YOUR BODY FROM PRODUCING ITS OWN HORMONES.** All Pills that contain estrogen and progestin prevent pregnancy by stopping ovulation and by thickening cervical mucus. They prevent your body from putting out its own estrogen and progesterone. (Your body makes some hormones — fat tissue, for instance, produces estrogen — but not many). So you're not double-dosing on hormones.

**NOT EVERYONE CAN TAKE THE PILL.** Smokers over 35 (their risk of death is six times higher than for nonsmokers over 35) and women with a history of blood clots, heart attack, stroke, liver disease, or breast cancer should consider different options.

**THE PILL WON'T MAKE YOU INFERTILE.** Women over 35 who run into trouble getting pregnant when they go off the Pill should blame their age, not the oral contraceptive, says Columbia University OB/GYN Dr. Katharine O'Connell.

**YOU DON'T NEED TO TAKE A BREAK FROM THE PILL.** "Take a break when you want to get pregnant," says Dr. Anita Nelson, an OB/GYN professor at UCLA. "Otherwise, there's no reason to stop."

**THE PILL IS NOT AN EGG PRESERVER.** Eggs still sit in your ovaries, get old, and die off. "Both the quality and quantity will decrease, regardless of whether you're on birth-control pills," says Dr. Melissa Gilliam, an OB/GYN at the University of Chicago.

**THE PILL DOESN'T RAISE BREAST-CANCER RISK.** And, in fact, it decreases the chance of ovarian cancer by 30 to 50 percent, and of endometrial cancer by 30 percent.