

*Let's talk
Women's Health*

DR. OLIVIA LEUNG, ND
www.avenahealthclinic.com

DR. NICOLE TILLIE, ND
www.nicoletillie.com

The Birth Control Pill

More than three quarters of Canadian women will use oral contraceptive at some point in their lives. The Pill is one of the most common forms of reversible contraception and it works very well when taken properly. Unfortunately, the Pill isn't necessarily great for every woman - many women experience side effects such as weight gain, decreased mood and sex drive, bloating, and breast tenderness, not to mention an increased risk of blood clots and estrogen sensitive cancers.

The birth control pill may be recommended for a variety of reasons: contraception, acne, irregular periods, periods that are too heavy or too painful, PCOS, endometriosis, fibroids, etc. Understand why you are taking it - for reasons other than contraception, it may just be a "band-aid" solution and it may not be addressing the root cause of your concerns.

Supporting your body while on the Pill

Nutrient depletions

The synthetic hormones in the birth control pill cause a burden to our bodies. The hormones require 'extra' processing in our bodies, utilizing many vitamins and nutrients as they are metabolized and broken down. Magnesium and B-vitamins are impacted the most:

- **Replacing Magnesium:** add dark green leafy vegetables into your diet on a regular basis, take an Epsom salt bath weekly, or try a magnesium bisglycinate supplement
- **Replacing B vitamins:** eating a well-balanced plate will insure you get your Bs in, if this is a challenge aim for a general B complex or one higher in vitamin B6
 - **Vitamin B6** is protective while you're on the Pill - it lowers your risk of blood clots and improves your serotonin levels to improve your mood

Let's talk Women's Health

DR. OLIVIA LEUNG, ND
www.avenahealthclinic.com

DR. NICOLE TILLIE, ND
www.nicoletillie.com

Gut health

The Pill can alter our gut bacteria which is crucial for digestive system, our immune system, and our brain health and mood, only to name a few. Pay attention to changes in symptoms, such as gas, bloating, constipation or diarrhea. Try and add in some prebiotic foods: kefir, yogurt, sauerkraut, kimchi, etc. or consider a probiotic

Optimize your detox pathways

Start with gentle ways to boost your detox:

- Increase your vegetable intake, especially with cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and green leafy vegetables) in order to increase your fibre intake and optimize your gut health
- Drink plenty of water and try starting your mornings with a cup of warm lemon water
- Exercise & sweat!
- Minimize alcohol and choose cleaner products to decrease the burden on your liver

Supporting your body after the Pill

If you are planning to stop taking oral contraceptive because you no longer need it, the side effects weren't worth it, or you want to get pregnant, it is best to start supporting your body at least one month beforehand to avoid any unwanted side effects from the drop in hormones.

Replenish lost nutrients

In order to support your body in making its own hormones and regulating the cycles once more, it is important to provide the nutrients required for these processes:

- B complex, high in vitamin B6
- Magnesium
- ACES + Zinc
- Healthy fats or omega-3s - fats are the building blocks of hormone synthesis

Let's talk Women's Health

DR. OLIVIA LEUNG, ND
www.avenahealthclinic.com

DR. NICOLE TILLIE, ND
www.nicoletillie.com

Promote detoxification

If you decide to come off of the pill, it's important to put emphasis on promoting detoxification, especially via the liver. The liver is the organ that is responsible for processing the synthetic hormones in the birth control pill. By enhancing liver detoxification, your body is making room, in a sense, for your own hormones and prevents any unwanted side effects. Here's what you can do to help your liver:

- **Minimize burden on the liver** - minimize alcohol, sugars, and environmental toxins (plastics, pesticides, etc)
- **Castor oil packs** - topically apply castor oil over your liver (top right of your abdomen) in order to increase the blood flow to the liver to boost detoxification
- Drink plenty of **water** and herbal teas to stay hydrated
- **Ensure good gut health** - hormone metabolites are eliminated through the stool; improve your bowel movements by aiming for 30g of fibre per day + plenty of water
- **Herbs** - this is a great time to use herbs to boost your liver detoxification - speak with your local Naturopathic doctor as to which herbs are right for you

What is normal?

Don't panic if your period doesn't come back right away - it can take up to 3 months to return! It is quite common for your period to come back the same way it was prior to the birth control pill, so if you had irregular cycles or heavy bleeding before, it is likely to happen again.

Note that it is possible to get pregnant even if your period has not returned!

If you would like to get pregnant, it is best to stop taking your oral contraceptives a minimum of 3-6 months prior to when you plan on trying to conceive. This gives your body a chance to rebalance its hormones.

DISCLAIMER: This handout is for informational purposes only - it is for reference only and by no means are Dr. Leung, ND or Dr. Tillie, ND stating that you should stop taking the birth control pill. Please ensure you are using a form of contraception if you do not intend to become pregnant.