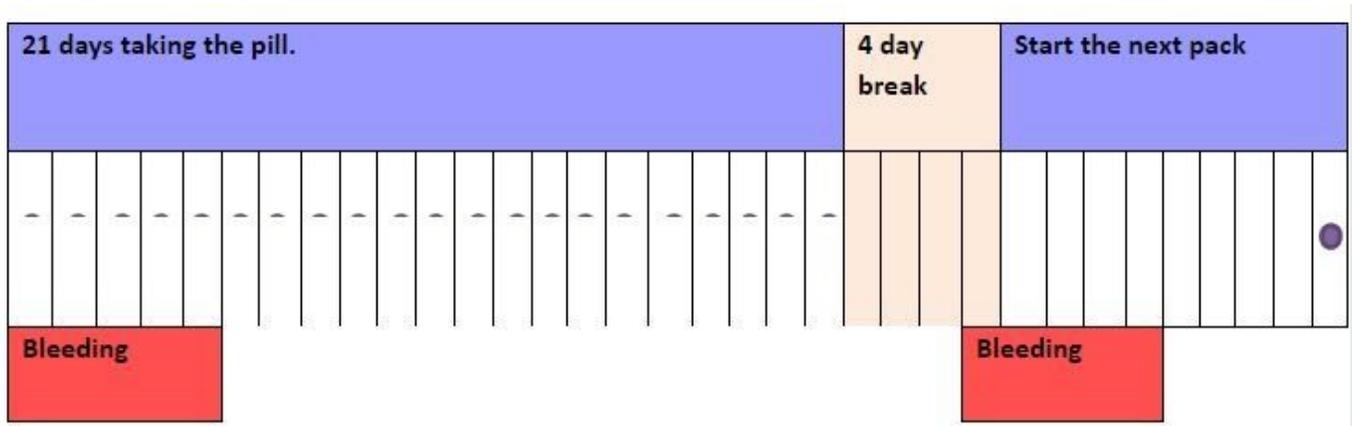


Oral contraceptive

4 day break information

Evidence based research shows that the 7 day break from taking the pill is too long.

A maximum of 4 days break between packs ensures that your contraceptive is more reliable. This evidence is supported by the WHO and is now standard practice.



There are 4 possible options you can choose from depending on your personal preference.

- 21/4 -take one pack of pills followed by a 4 day break, if you prefer a period every month. This is our most usual recommendation here in UCD
- 63/4 -take 3 packs of pills back to back followed by a 4 day break.
- 84/4 -take 4 packs of pills back to back followed by a 4 day break.
- Continuous (365) -take the pill every day of the year without a break.

As well as being more reliable there are other advantages to these new ways of taking the pill:

- It's great if you want to avoid bleeding ie. for sporting fixtures/ holidays/special occasions.
- It can reduce problems such as period pain /headaches and PMT.

The period you get while taking the pill is a hormone withdrawal bleed and only happens because you have stopped taking the pill for a few days. It is not essential to have a bleed every month. When you stop the pill for 4 days you should expect to have a bleed on day 4 of the break or sometimes the first few days of your new pill packet.

Continuous pill taking (365)

When taking the pill continuously (365) you should **start on the first day of a normal period**. Take one pill every day until that strip is finished and then without stopping go straight onto the next strip. Keep doing this until you get 2 days of bleeding right next to each other. Some people get no bleeding with 365 pill taking.

If you get 2 days bleeding stop the pill for 4 days then restart the pill continuously as before. You should expect to get a bleed around day 4 of the break or in the first few days of the new packet. Take the pill continuously until you next have bleeding and take another 4 day break.

If you get bleeding MORE than once in a month please contact your doctor as taking more than one 4 day break in a monthly cycle can make the pill less effective.

Please note that you should always check if you are starting new medications as they may make your pill less effective.

This advice is what is known as 'off licence' prescribing. Prescribing off licence is as safe as taking the pill in the standard way as we still follow all appropriate medical guidelines, it just makes the pill better and more effective for you.