

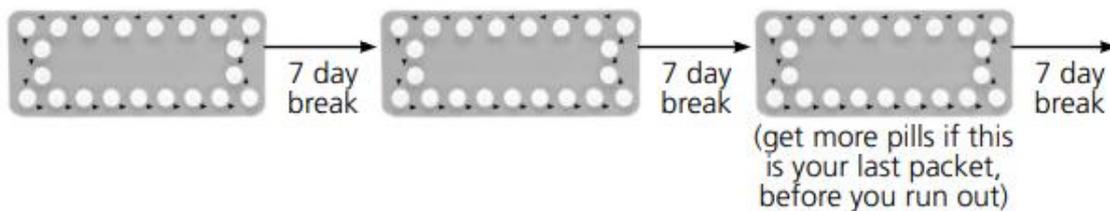
## Different ways to take the combined Contraceptive Pill

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### Traditional Method:

The combined contraceptive pill was designed so that women would still have a 'period' every 4 weeks, to mimic the natural cycle. This is the way that the combined pill was originally licensed to be used. If you would like to have a regular monthly bleed, take the pill in this way.

- Take 21 pills (starting on the first or second day of your period, or as instructed by your doctor/nurse). This is the amount of pills in 1 packet.
- When you have finished the packet, have a 7 day pill free interval or 'break'. During these 7 days you will usually have a bleed. It is likely to be shorter and lighter than your natural period.
- **On the 8<sup>th</sup> day** start the next packet (even if you are still bleeding)

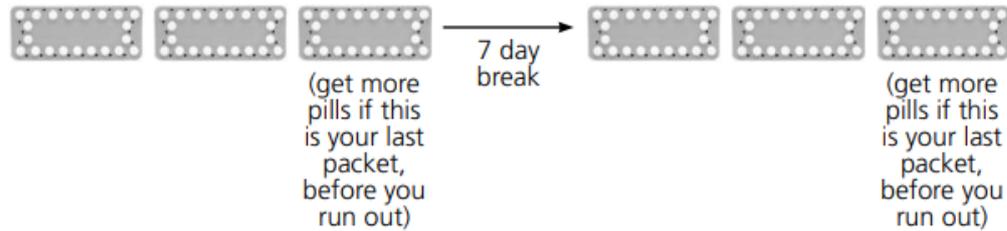


### Tricycling

This means taking 3 packets of the pill without a break, then having a 7 day break, and then taking a further 3 packets of the pill without a break, etc. Instead of having 13 bleeds each year, you will only have 5. This can be helpful if you usually have troublesome symptoms when you have a 'period'.

## TRICYCLING

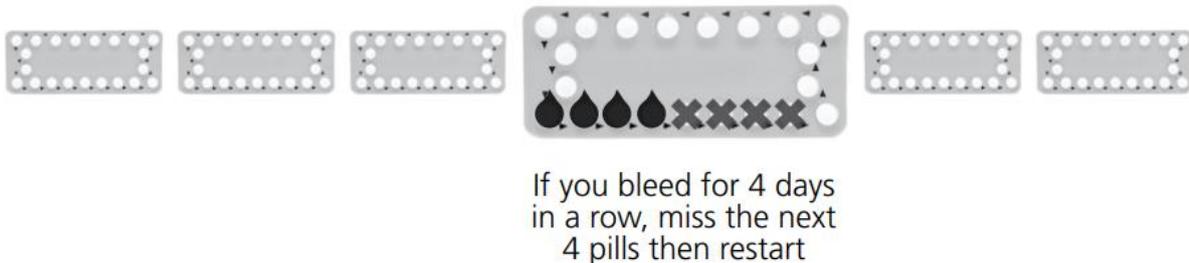
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## Tailored/Continuous Pill taking

If you want to have as few bleeds as possible then you can take pill packets back-to-back continuously. You may still have a bleed whilst taking the pills. You will need to remember to get more pills before your last packet runs out.

If you bleed for 4 days in a row whilst taking your pills continuously, **then stop taking your pills for 4 days**. Pop these 4 pills out of the packet and dispose of them safely, so you can stay on the correct day of the week. During these 4 days you will continue to bleed. On the fifth day start taking your pills again. Continue taking the packets back-to-back. If you start bleeding again and this lasts for 4 days in a row, stop the pill again for 4 days. **Make sure you don't take a break more than once every 4 weeks, as this could affect your contraception.**



Some women always start bleeding after a certain length of time (for example, during the 4<sup>th</sup> packet of pills). If this happens regularly, you can take a planned 4 day break before the time you are likely to start bleeding. If you have a holiday or party coming up and you are worried you might start bleeding during this time, you can deliberately take a 4 day break the week before to get the bleed over with.

## **How safe is tricycling and tailored/continuous pill taking?**

Tailored/continuous pill taking and tricycling are examples of 'off licence' prescribing. As the pills are being used in a different way from how they were originally licensed to be used.

These ways of taking combined contraceptive pills are now recommended by the faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare, as they can help with period related symptoms. They are safe and may be more effective at preventing pregnancy. They do not affect a women's return to fertility on stopping the pill.