

[Home](#)

2. Ethinyl estradiol/levonorgestrel

Ethinyl estradiol and levonorgestrel

Generic name: ethinyl estradiol and levonorgestrel [*ETH-in-ill-ess-tra-DYE-ol-and-LEE-vo-nor-JESS-trel*]**Brand names:** [Afirmelle](#), [Altavera](#), [Amethyst](#), [Aubra EQ](#), [Aviane](#), ... [show all 24 brands](#)**Dosage forms:** oral tablet (20 mcg-100 mcg; 20 mcg-90 mcg; 30 mcg-0.15 mg; triphasic; with iron 20 mcg-100 mcg), ... [show all 2 dosage forms](#)**Drug class:** [Contraceptives](#)[Medically reviewed](#) by Drugs.com on Mar 31, 2025. Written by [Cerner Multum](#).[Uses](#) [Side effects](#) [Warnings](#) [Before taking](#) [Dosage](#) [Interactions](#)

What is ethinyl estradiol and levonorgestrel?

[Ethinyl estradiol](#) and [levonorgestrel](#) is used as contraception to prevent pregnancy. There are many brands and forms of ethinyl estradiol and levonorgestrel available. Not all brands are listed on this leaflet.

Ethinyl estradiol and levonorgestrel may also be used for purposes not listed in this medication guide.

Ethinyl estradiol and levonorgestrel side effects

Get emergency medical help if you have **signs of an allergic reaction**: hives; difficult breathing; swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat.

Birth control pills may cause serious side effects. Stop using birth control pills and call your doctor at once if you have:

- **signs of a stroke**--sudden numbness or weakness (especially on one side of the body), severe headache, slurred speech, balance problems;
- **signs of a blood clot**--sudden vision loss, stabbing chest pain, feeling short of breath, coughing up blood, swelling or redness in an arm or leg;
- **heart attack symptoms**--chest pain or pressure, pain spreading to your jaw or shoulder, sweating;
- **liver problems**--loss of appetite, upper stomach pain, tiredness, fever, dark urine, clay-colored stools, jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes);
- **increased blood pressure**--severe headache, blurred vision, pounding in your neck or ears;
- **gallbladder problem**--chalky-colored stools, stomach pain after eating, nausea, heartburn, bloating, and severe upper stomach pain that may spread to your back;
- swelling in your hands, ankles, or feet;

- changes in the pattern or severity of migraine headaches;
- a breast lump; or
- **symptoms of depression**--sleep problems, weakness, tired feeling, mood changes.

Common side effects of ethinyl estradiol and levonorgestrel may include:

- nausea, vomiting (especially when you first start taking this medicine);
- breast tenderness;
- [breakthrough bleeding](#);
- acne, darkening of facial skin;
- weight gain; or
- problems with contact lenses.

This is not a complete list of side effects and others may occur. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

 [Ethinyl estradiol / levonorgestrel side effects](#) (more detail)

Related/similar drugs

Medroxyprogesterone

Medroxyprogesterone (Provera) treats conditions such as absent or irregular menstrual periods, or ...

Reviews & ratings

4.5 / 10

[2,469 Reviews](#)

[View more](#)

Mirena

Mirena (levonorgestrel) is a plastic intrauterine device placed in the uterus and is used to ...

Reviews & ratings

6.1 / 10

[2,624 Reviews](#)

[View more](#)

FEATURED

Omvox

Omvox is used to treat moderate to

severe ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease in adults. This ...

Reviews & ratings

[1 Reviews](#)

[View more](#)

Depo Provera

Depo-Provera is used as contraception to prevent pregnancy. It is also used to reduce pain cause by ...

Reviews & ratings

4.2 / 10

[1,967 Reviews](#)

[View more](#)

Nexplanon

Nexplanon is a long-term, reversible birth control implant that lasts for three years. Learn about ...

Reviews & ratings

5.0 / 10

[4,864 Reviews](#)

[View more](#)

Yaz

Yaz (drospirenone and ethinyl estradiol) is used as a contraceptive to prevent pregnancy. Includes ...

Reviews & ratings

5.9 / 10

[997 Reviews](#)

[View more](#)

Slynd

Slynd (drospirenone) is a birth control pill used for the prevention of pregnancy. Includes Slynd ...

Reviews & ratings

[View more](#)

Warnings

Do not use birth control pills if you are pregnant or if you have recently had a baby.

You should not use birth control pills if you have: uncontrolled [high blood pressure](#), [heart disease](#), [coronary artery disease](#), circulation problems (especially with diabetes), undiagnosed vaginal bleeding, [liver disease](#) or liver cancer, severe migraine headaches, if you also take certain hepatitis C medication, if you will have major surgery, if you smoke and are over 35, or if you have ever had a heart attack, a stroke, a blood clot, jaundice caused by pregnancy or [birth control pills](#), or cancer of the breast, uterus/cervix, or vagina.

Taking birth control pills can increase your risk of blood clots, stroke, or heart attack.

Smoking can greatly increase your risk of blood clots, stroke, or heart attack. You should not take ethinyl estradiol and levonorgestrel if you smoke and are over 35 years old.

Before taking this medicine

Taking this medicine can increase your risk of blood clots, stroke, or heart attack. You are even more at risk if you have high blood pressure, diabetes, [high cholesterol](#), or if you are overweight. Your risk of stroke or blood clot is highest during your first year of taking [birth control pills](#). Your risk is also high when you restart this medicine after not taking it for 4 weeks or longer.

Smoking can greatly increase your risk of blood clots, stroke, or heart attack. Your risk increases the older you are and the more you smoke. You should not take combination birth control pills if you smoke and are over 35 years old.

Do not use if you are pregnant. Stop using this medicine and tell your doctor right away if you become pregnant, or if you miss two menstrual periods in a row. If you have recently had a baby, wait at least 4 weeks before taking birth control pills.

You should not take birth control pills if you have:

- untreated or uncontrolled high blood pressure;
- heart disease (chest pain, coronary artery disease, history of heart attack, stroke, or blood clot);
- an increased risk of having blood clots due to a heart problem or a hereditary blood disorder;
- circulation problems (especially if caused by diabetes);
- a history of hormone-related cancer, or cancer of the breast, uterus/cervix, or vagina;
- unusual vaginal bleeding that has not been checked by a doctor;
- liver disease or liver cancer;
- severe migraine headaches (with aura, numbness, weakness, or vision changes), especially if you are older than 35;

- a history of jaundice caused by pregnancy or birth control pills; or
- if you take any hepatitis C medication containing [ombitasvir/paritaprevir/ritonavir](#) (Technivie).

Tell your doctor if you have ever had:

- heart disease, high blood pressure, or if you are prone to having blood clots;
- high cholesterol or triglycerides, or if you are overweight;
- depression;
- a seizure or [migraine headache](#);
- diabetes, [gallbladder disease](#);
- liver or kidney disease;
- irregular menstrual cycles; or
- [fibrocystic breast disease](#), lumps, nodules, or an abnormal mammogram.

Ethinyl estradiol and levonorgestrel can slow breast milk production. You should not breastfeed while using this medicine.

How should I take ethinyl estradiol and levonorgestrel?

Follow all directions on your prescription label and read all medication guides or instruction sheets. Use the medicine exactly as directed.

Take your first pill on the first day of your period or on the first Sunday after your period begins. You may need to use back-up birth control, such as condoms or a spermicide, when you first start using ethinyl estradiol and levonorgestrel. Follow your doctor's instructions.

Take one pill every day, no more than 24 hours apart. When the pills run out, start a new pack the following day. **You may get pregnant if you do not take one pill daily.** Get your prescription refilled before you run out of pills completely.

Some birth control packs contain seven "reminder" pills to keep you on your regular cycle. Your period will usually begin while you are using these reminder pills.

You should chew the **chewable tablet** (pill) and then swallow it with a glass of water, or if you prefer you should swallow the **chewable tablet** (pill) whole. Take it on an empty stomach.

Use a back-up birth control if you are sick with severe vomiting or diarrhea.

You may have breakthrough bleeding, especially during the first 3 months. Tell your doctor if this bleeding continues or is very heavy.

If you need major surgery or will be on long-term bed rest, you may need to stop using this medicine for a short time. Any doctor or surgeon who treats you should know that you are using birth control pills.

While taking birth control pills, you will need to visit your doctor regularly.

Store at room temperature away from moisture, heat, and light.

Ethinyl estradiol and levonorgestrel dosing information

Usual Adult Dose for Contraception:

Oral tablets: 1 tablet orally once a day at the same time each day in the order directed on the blister pack

Transdermal System:

Four week cycle: Apply 1 patch once a week for 3 consecutive weeks; no patch is to be worn during week 4, cycle is then repeated

Comments:

- To achieve maximal contraceptive efficacy, tablets should be taken at intervals not exceeding 24 hours.
- Tablets may be started on the first Sunday after the onset of menstruation (Sunday Start) or on Day 1 of menstruation (Day 1 Start).
- The first transdermal system should be applied during the first 24 hours of menstruation.

Use: To prevent pregnancy.

--Transdermal use is for women with a body mass index (BMI) of less than 30 kg/m² as those with a BMI of 30 kg/m² or greater may have reduced efficacy and may be at higher risk for [venous thromboembolism](#) events; consider reduced effectiveness in women with a BMI of 25 to less than 30 kg/m²

Usual Pediatric Dose for Contraception:

For postmenarchal females:

Oral tablets: 1 tablet orally once a day at the same time each day in the order directed on the blister pack

Transdermal System:

Four week cycle: Apply 1 patch once a week for 3 consecutive weeks; no patch is to be worn during week 4, cycle is then repeated

Comments:

- To achieve maximal contraceptive efficacy, tablets should be taken at intervals not exceeding 24 hours.
- Tablets may be started on the first Sunday after the onset of menstruation (Sunday Start) or on Day 1 of menstruation (Day 1 Start).
- The first transdermal system should be applied during the first 24 hours of menstruation.

Use: To prevent pregnancy.

--Transdermal use is for women with a body mass index (BMI) of less than 30 kg/m² as those with a BMI of 30 kg/m² or greater may have reduced efficacy and may be at higher risk for [venous thromboembolism](#) events; consider reduced effectiveness in women with a BMI of 25 to less than 30 kg/m²

 [Detailed Ethinyl estradiol / levonorgestrel dosage information](#)

What happens if I miss a dose?

Follow the patient instructions provided with your medicine. Missing a pill increases your risk of becoming pregnant.

If you miss one active pill, take two pills on the day that you remember. Then take one pill per day for the rest of the pack.

If you miss two active pills in a row in Week 1 or 2, take two pills per day for two days in a row. Then take one pill per day for the rest of the pack. Use back-up birth control for at least 7 days following the missed pills.

If you miss two active pills in a row in Week 3, throw out the rest of the pack and start a new pack the same day if you are a Day 1 starter. If you are a Sunday starter, keep taking a pill every day until Sunday. On Sunday, throw out the rest of the pack and start a new pack that day.

If you miss three active pills in a row in Week 1, 2, or 3, throw out the rest of the pack and start a new pack on the same day if you are a Day 1 starter. If you are a Sunday starter, keep taking a pill every day until Sunday. On Sunday, throw out the rest of the pack and start a new pack that day.

If you miss two or more active pills, you may not have a period during the month. **If you miss a period for two months in a row, call your doctor because you might be pregnant.**

If you miss a reminder pill, throw it away and keep taking one reminder pill per day until the pack is empty.

What happens if I overdose?

Seek emergency medical attention or call the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222. Overdose symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, and drowsiness.

What should I avoid while taking ethinyl estradiol and levonorgestrel?

Do not smoke while taking birth control pills, especially if you are older than 35 years of age.

Birth control pills will not protect you from [sexually transmitted diseases](#)--including HIV and AIDS. Using a condom is the only way to protect yourself from these diseases.

What other drugs will affect ethinyl estradiol and levonorgestrel?

Other drugs may interact with birth control pills, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and [herbal products](#). **Some drugs can make birth control pills less effective, which may result in pregnancy.** Tell your doctor about all your current medicines and any medicine you start or stop using.

 [Ethinyl estradiol / levonorgestrel drug interactions](#) (more detail)

Does ethinyl estradiol/levonorgestrel interact with my other drugs?

Enter medications to view a detailed interaction report using our [Drug Interaction Checker](#).

ethinyl estradiol/levonorgestrel

+

Enter a drug name

Add

More about ethinyl estradiol / levonorgestrel

- [Check interactions](#)
- [Compare alternatives](#)
- [Pricing & coupons](#)
- [Reviews \(5,078\)](#)
- [Drug images](#)
- [Side effects](#)
- [Dosage information](#)
- [During pregnancy](#)
- [Drug class: contraceptives](#)

Patient resources

- [Ethinyl estradiol and levonorgestrel extended-cycle drug information](#)
- [Ethinyl estradiol and levonorgestrel transdermal](#)
- [Levonorgestrel and ethinyl estradiol \(Oral\) \(Advanced Reading\)](#)
- [Levonorgestrel and ethinyl estradiol \(Transdermal\) \(Advanced Reading\)](#)
- [Levonorgestrel, ethinyl estradiol, and ferrous bisglycinate \(Advanced Reading\)](#)

Other brands

[Aviane](#), [Vienna](#), [Jolessa](#), [Altavera](#), ... +45 more

Professional resources

- [Levonorgestrel and Ethinyl Estradiol prescribing information](#)

Other brands

[Aviane](#), [Vienna](#), [Jolessa](#), [Altavera](#), ... +50 more

Related treatment guides

- [Birth Control](#)
- [Gonadotropin Inhibition](#)
- [Abnormal Uterine Bleeding](#)
- [Emergency Contraception](#)

Further information

Remember, keep this and all other medicines out of the reach of children, never share your medicines with others, and use this medication only for the indication prescribed.


Always consult your healthcare provider to ensure the information displayed on this page applies to your personal circumstances.

Emergency Contraception 101

[Emergency Contraception Overview](#)

[Emergency Contraceptives Available in the U.S.](#)

DRUG STATUS

Availability	
Rx	Prescription only
Pregnancy & Lactation	
	Risk data available
CSA Schedule*	
N/A	Not a controlled drug
Approval History	
	Drug history at FDA

User Reviews & Ratings

5.2 / 10

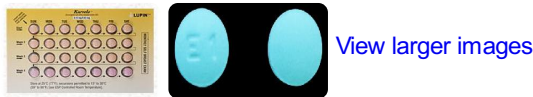
[5,078 Reviews](#)

Related News

[Certain Birth Control Pills, Devices Linked to Higher Heart Risks](#)

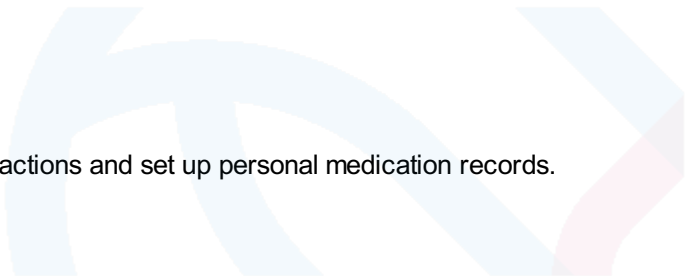
Images

[Kurvelo ethinyl estradiol 0.03 mg / levonorgestrel 0.15 mg \(LU U31\)](#)



Drugs.com Mobile App

Access drug & treatment information, identify pills, check interactions and set up personal medication records.





About

[About Drugs.com](#)

[Advertising policy](#)

[Attribution & citations](#)

Terms & privacy

[Terms of use](#)

[Editorial policy](#)

[Privacy policy](#)

Support

[Help center](#)

[Sitemap](#)

[Contact us](#)



[Subscribe to our newsletter](#) for the latest medication news, new drug approvals and FDA alerts.

Drugs.com provides accurate and independent information on more than 24,000 prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines and natural products. This material is provided for educational purposes only and is not intended for medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Data sources include Micromedex (updated 7 Apr 2025), Cerner Multum™ (updated 13 Apr 2025), ASHP (updated 10 Apr 2025) and others.



Ad Choices
ADVERTISEMENT



Copyright © 2000-2025 Drugs.com. All rights reserved.