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2. Ortho Cyclen

# Ortho-Cyclen

**Generic name:** [ethinyl estradiol and norgestimate](#) [ *ETH-i-nil-ES-tra-DYE-ol-and-nor-JES-ti-mate* ]

**Drug class:** [Contraceptives](#)

Medically reviewed by [Philip Thornton, DipPharm](#). Last updated on Jun 4, 2024.

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The Ortho Cyclen brand name has been **discontinued** in the U.S. If generic versions of this product have been approved by the FDA, there may be [generic equivalents available](#).

## What is Ortho-Cyclen?

Ortho-Cyclen contains a combination of female hormones, ([ethinyl estradiol and norgestimate](#)), that prevent ovulation (the release of an egg from an ovary). Ethinyl estradiol and norgestimate also causes a change in your cervical mucus and uterine lining, making it harder for sperm to reach the uterus and harder for a fertilized egg to attach to the uterus.

Ortho-Cyclen is used as [contraception](#) to prevent pregnancy.

Ortho-Cyclen is also used to treat moderate [acne vulgaris](#) in females who are at least 15 old. This medicine should be used for the treatment of acne only if the patient desires an oral contraceptive for birth control.

## Warnings

**Do not use Ortho-Cyclen if you are pregnant or if you have recently had a baby.**

**You should not use Ortho-Cyclen 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 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 Ortho-Cyclen 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 Ortho-Cyclen if you smoke and are over 35 years old.

## Before taking this medicine

Taking Ortho-Cyclen 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 Ortho-Cyclen. Your risk is also high when you restart taking combination birth control pills after not taking them 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 Ortho-Cyclen.

You should not take Ortho-Cyclen 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).

To make sure Ortho-Cyclen are safe for you, tell your doctor if you have ever had:

- heart problems, high blood pressure, or if you are prone 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.

The hormones in Ortho-Cyclen can pass into breast milk and may harm a nursing baby. This medication may also slow breast milk production. Do not use if you are breast-feeding a baby.

 [Ortho Cyclen pregnancy and breastfeeding warnings](#) (more detail)

## How should I take Ortho-Cyclen?

Take Ortho-Cyclen exactly as prescribed by your doctor. Follow all directions on your prescription label. Do not take this medicine in larger or smaller amounts or for longer than recommended.

You will 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 with spermicide, when you first start using Ortho-Cyclen. 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.

Ortho-Cyclen packs contain seven dark green "reminder" pills to keep you on your regular cycle. Your period will usually begin while you are using these reminder pills.

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

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

**If you need major surgery with 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 Ortho-Cyclen.

While taking Ortho-Cyclen, you will need to visit your doctor regularly.

Store this medicine at room temperature away from moisture and heat.

## Dosing information

### Usual Adult Dose for Contraception:

1 tablet orally once a day

### Usual Adult Dose for Acne:

1 tablet orally once a day

Comments: Not all preparations are indicated for the treatment of acne; the manufacturer product information should be consulted.

### Usual Pediatric Dose for Contraception:

1 tablet orally once a day

### Usual Pediatric Dose for Acne:

15 years or older: 1 tablet orally once a day

-Use should be reserved for the treatment of acne only if the patient desires an oral contraceptive for birth control.

Use: For the treatment of moderate acne vulgaris in females at least 15 years of age with no known contraindications to oral contraceptive therapy and who have achieved menarche

 [Detailed Ortho Cyclen dosage information](#)

## What happens if I miss a dose?

Follow the patient instructions provided in your Ortho-Cyclen packet. 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 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.

## What to avoid

**Do not smoke while taking Ortho-Cyclen**, especially if you are older than 35 years of age.

Ortho-Cyclen 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.

## Ortho-Cyclen side effects

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

Stop using Ortho-Cyclen and call your doctor at once if you have:

- **signs of a stroke** - sudden numbness or weakness (especially on one side of the body), sudden severe headache, slurred speech, problems with vision or balance;
- **signs of a blood clot** - sudden vision loss, stabbing chest pain, feeling short of breath, coughing up blood, pain or warmth in one or both legs;
- **heart attack symptoms** - chest pain or pressure, pain spreading to your jaw or shoulder, nausea, 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;
- 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 Ortho-Cyclen side effects may include:

- nausea, vomiting (especially when you first start taking this medicine);
- breast tenderness;
- acne, darkening of facial skin;
- headache, nervousness;
- problems with contact lenses;
- changes in weight;
- breakthrough bleeding;
- vaginal itching or discharge; or
- rash.

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.

 [Ortho Cyclen side effects](#) (more detail)

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## What other drugs will affect Ortho-Cyclen?

Other drugs may interact with ethinyl estradiol and norgestimate, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal products. Some drugs can make Ortho-Cyclen less effective, which may result in pregnancy. Tell your doctor about all your current medicines and any medicine you start or stop using.

 [Ortho Cyclen drug interactions](#) (more detail)

## Does Ortho Cyclen interact with my other drugs?

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

Ortho Cyclen

+

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## Patient resources

- [Ortho-Cyclen advanced reading](#)
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## Professional resources

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

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## Further information


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


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

[Medical Disclaimer](#)

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### DRUG STATUS

**Availability**  
 Discontinued

**Pregnancy & Lactation**  
 Risk data available

**CSA Schedule\***  
N/A Not a controlled drug



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[Ortho cyclen inert \(Ortho Ortho\)](#)

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