

UK Medical Eligibility Criteria (UKMEC) for combined oral contraceptive use²

UKMEC Category 1 – Unrestricted Use	
Age – menarche to <40 years	Cervical ectropion
Parity – nulliparous and parous	Breast disease – benign breast disease or a family history of breast cancer
Breastfeeding – >6 months postpartum	Endometrial or ovarian cancer
Postpartum – >21 days if not breastfeeding	Uterine fibroids – with or without distortion of the uterine cavity
Post-abortion – immediately first and second trimester, and post-septic	PID – current; or past history of, with or without subsequent pregnancy
Past ectopic pregnancy	STI – current, vaginitis or increased risk of STI
History of pelvic surgery	HIV/AIDS – risk of HIV/AIDS, current HIV not using antiretroviral therapy
Minor surgery without immobilisation	Schistosomiasis, pelvic and non-pelvic tuberculosis, malaria
Varicose veins	Diabetes – history of gestational disease
Non-migrainous headaches – mild or severe	Thyroid disorders
Epilepsy – and not using liver enzyme-inducers	Viral hepatitis – carrier
Depressive disorders	Anaemias – thalassaemia, iron deficiency
Vaginal bleeding – unsuspicious irregular, heavy or prolonged	Raynaud's disease – primary without lupus anticoagulant
Endometriosis	
Benign ovarian tumour	
Severe dysmenorrhoea	
Gestational trophoblastic neoplasia – when hCG is normal	
UKMEC Category 2 – Benefits generally outweigh risks	
Age – ≥40 years ^a	Vaginal bleeding – suspicious for serious condition before evaluation
Breastfeeding – between 6 weeks and 6 months postpartum and partially breastfeeding (medium to low)	CIN and cervical cancer
Smoking – aged <35 years, or aged ≥35 years and stopped smoking ≥1 year ago	HIV/AIDS – current HIV using antiretroviral therapy, or current AIDS and using HAART
Obesity – BMI ≥30–34 kg/m ²	Diabetes – NIDDM and IDDM, non-vascular disease
History of high blood pressure during pregnancy	Gallbladder disease – asymptomatic or treated with a cholecystectomy
Family history of VTE in a first-degree relative aged ≥45 years	History of cholestasis – pregnancy-related
Major surgery without prolonged immobilisation	Inflammatory bowel disease
Superficial thrombophlebitis	Sickle cell disease
Known hyperlipidaemias – e.g. common hypercholesterolaemia or familial combined hyperlipidaemia	Raynaud's disease – secondary without lupus anticoagulant
Valvular and congenital heart disease – uncomplicated	Non-liver enzyme-inducing antibiotics
Migraine headaches – without aura in women aged <35 years	Highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART)

UKMEC Category 3 – Risks generally outweigh benefits^b

Breastfeeding – between 6 weeks and 6 months postpartum and fully or almost fully breastfeeding

Postpartum – <21 days postpartum

Smoking – aged ≥35 years and smoking <15 cigarettes per day, or stopped smoking <1 year ago

Obesity – BMI 35–39 kg/m²

Cardiovascular disease – multiple risk factors for arterial cardiovascular disease

Hypertension – elevated blood pressure >140 to 159 mmHg systolic or >90 to 94 mmHg diastolic

Family history of VTE in a first-degree relative aged <45 years

Immobility (unrelated to surgery) – e.g. wheelchair use, debilitating illness

Known hyperlipidaemias – e.g. familial hypercholesterolaemia

Migraine headaches – without aura in women aged ≥35 years; or a past history of migraine with aura at any age

Breast disease – past history of breast cancer and no evidence of recurrence for 5 years; carriers of known gene mutations associated with breast cancer (e.g. BRCA1); undiagnosed mass

Diabetes – with nephropathy/retinopathy/neuropathy; or other vascular disease or diabetes of >20 years' duration (category given will depend on disease severity)

Gallbladder disease – symptomatic medically treated or current

History of cholestasis – past COC-related

Cirrhosis – mild compensated disease

Drugs which induce liver enzymes – e.g. rifampicin, rifabutin, St John's Wort, griseofulvin and certain anticonvulsants (i.e. phenytoin, carbamazepine, barbiturates, primidone, topiramate, oxcarbazepine)

UKMEC Category 4 – Unacceptable health risk and should not be used

Breastfeeding – <6 weeks postpartum

Smoking – aged ≥35 years and smoking ≥15 cigarettes per day

Obesity – BMI ≥40 kg/m²

Cardiovascular disease – multiple risk factors for arterial cardiovascular disease

Hypertension – blood pressure ≥160 mmHg systolic and/or ≥95 mmHg diastolic; or vascular disease

VTE – current (on anticoagulants) or past history

Major surgery with prolonged immobilisation

Known thrombogenic mutations

Current and history of ischaemic heart disease

Stroke

Valvular and congenital heart disease – complicated by pulmonary hypertension, atrial fibrillation, history of subacute bacterial endocarditis

Migraine headaches – with aura at any age

Gestational trophoblastic neoplasia – when hCG is abnormal

Breast disease – current breast cancer

Diabetes – with nephropathy, retinopathy, neuropathy or other vascular disease, or diabetes of >20 years' duration (category given will depend on disease severity)

Viral hepatitis – active disease

Cirrhosis – severe decompensated disease

Liver tumours – benign and malignant

Raynaud's disease – secondary with lupus anticoagulant and thus a tendency to thrombosis

a Age ≥40 years: women may use COC until age 50 years if there are no medical contraindications.

b Definition of UKMEC 3 – the risks generally outweigh the benefits but the method can be considered for use with clinical judgement and/or specialist referral if other methods are unacceptable.

AIDS, acquired immune deficiency syndrome; BMI, body mass

index; CIN, cervical intraepithelial neoplasia; HAART, highly active antiretroviral therapy; hCG, human chorionic gonadotrophin; HIV, human immunodeficiency virus; IDDM, insulin-dependent diabetes; NIDDM, non-insulin-dependent diabetes; PID, pelvic inflammatory disease; STI, sexually transmitted infection; TB, tuberculosis; VTE, venous thromboembolism.