

Contraception and menopause

You cannot know for sure if you have reached menopause when you're on the contraceptive pill. This is because hormonal contraception can affect your periods.

Menopause is usually diagnosed if:

- you're over 50 and have not had a period for more than 12 months
- you're under 50 and have not had a period for more than 2 years
- you've stopped having periods and are no longer able to get pregnant naturally

These rules do not apply if you're taking hormonal contraception.

In younger women, there are other reasons [why your periods might stop](#).

Talk to your GP if you're worried about your periods.

Bleeding if you're on the pill, patch or vaginal ring

If you are taking combined contraceptives, you'll usually have monthly period-type bleeds if you take a break from the hormones each month. A combined contraceptive has oestrogen and progestogen. Examples of combined contraceptives are the pill, patch or ring.

If you're taking the progestogen-only pill, you may have [irregular periods](#) or they may stop altogether for as long as you keep taking the pill.

The combined pill may also mask or control menopausal symptoms, such as hot flushes and night sweats.

These factors can make it hard to know when you've stopped ovulating and cannot get pregnant anymore.

Test

A blood test to measure levels of follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) can show if you are becoming menopausal.

But often an FSH test is not reliable if you're taking the combined pill, patch or ring.

Stopping contraception

You can stop using contraception at the age of 55 as getting pregnant naturally after this is very rare.

When you turn 40, you should not continue to take the combined pill if you have a risk factor. Risk factors include being a smoker or having a BMI over 30. Only very low-risk users can continue it between 40 and 50 years.

Your GP may recommend that you stop the combined pill and change to a progestogen-only pill or another type of contraception.

Use a barrier method of contraception like condoms to avoid getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

[Sexually transmitted infections - sexualwellbeing.ie](https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie)

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