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Birth control pill overdose

Birth control pills, also called oral contraceptives, are prescription medicines used to prevent pregnancy. Birth control pill overdose occurs when someone takes more than the normal or recommended amount of this medicine. This can be by accident or on purpose.

This article is for information only. DO NOT use it to treat or manage an actual overdose. If you or someone you are with overdoses, call your local emergency number (such as 911), or your local poison control center can be reached directly by calling the national toll-free Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222) from anywhere in the United States.

Poisonous Ingredient

Most birth control pills contain one of the following combinations of estrogen and progestin hormones:

- Ethynodiol diacetate and ethinyl estradiol
- Ethynodiol diacetate and mestranol
- Levonorgestrel and ethinyl estradiol
- Norethindrone acetate and ethinyl estradiol
- Norethindrone and ethinyl estradiol
- Mestranol and norethindrone
- Mestranol and norethynodrel
- Norgestrel and ethinyl estradiol

These birth control pills contain progestin only:

- Norethindrone
- Norgestrel

Other birth control pills may also contain these ingredients.

Where Found

Here are several birth control medicines:

- Levonorgestrel

- Levonorgestrel and ethinyl estradiol
- Norethindrone
- Norethindrone acetate and ethinyl estradiol
- Norethindrone and ethinyl estradiol

Other birth control pills may also be available.

Symptoms

Symptoms of an overdose of birth control pills include:

- Breast tenderness
- Discolored urine
- Drowsiness
- Heavy vaginal bleeding (2 to 7 days after the overdose)
- Headache
- Emotional changes
- Nausea and vomiting
- Rash

Home Care

Seek medical help right away, and call poison control. Do NOT make the person throw up unless poison control or a health care provider tells you to.

Stop using the birth control pills and use other methods to prevent pregnancy, if desired. The overdose is not likely to be life-threatening.

Before Calling Emergency

Have this information ready:

- The person's age, weight, and condition
- The name of the medicine (ingredients and strength, if known)
- When it was swallowed
- The amount swallowed
- If the medicine was prescribed for the person

Poison Control

Your local poison control center can be reached directly by calling the national toll-free Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222) from anywhere in the United States. This national hotline will let you talk to experts in poisoning. They will give you further instructions.

This is a free and confidential service. All local poison control centers in the United States use this national number. You should call if you have any questions about poisoning or poison prevention. It does NOT need to be an emergency. You can call for any reason, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

What to Expect at the Emergency Room

A trip to the emergency room (ER) will probably not be necessary. If you do go, take the container with you to the hospital, if possible.

If an ER visit is needed, the provider will measure and monitor the person's vital signs, including temperature, pulse, breathing rate, and blood pressure.

The person may have blood and urine tests, and may receive:

- Activated charcoal (in extreme cases)
- Medicines to treat symptoms

Outlook (Prognosis)

Serious symptoms are very unlikely. Birth control pills may affect the metabolism of other medicines, which can result in other, more serious symptoms or side effects.

References

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Review Date 7/1/2023

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[Learn how to cite this page](#)



06/01/2028

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