FACT SHEET: Progestin Only Pills
(“mini-pills”)

Before using the pill, you need to know the advantages, disadvantages, risks, and warning signs. This fact sheet, along with the individualized education provided by our staff, represent your informed consent for this method. You will also be given the FDA approved manufacturer’s information. You are encouraged to read this information. A Nurse Practitioner is always available to answer any of your questions.

Progestin only pills (POPs) are oral contraceptive pills that contain no estrogen. Each pill in the pack contains progestin. There is no hormone-free week with POPs. POPs prevent pregnancy by preventing ovulation (the release of an egg from the ovary) and by thickening the cervical mucus preventing sperm penetration.

**BENEFITS:**
- 95-99 percent effective against pregnancy when used correctly;
- No estrogen. Less risk of the rare but serious side effects of estrogen;
- POPs can be considered for women who cannot take estrogen. Women who:
  - Are breast feeding
  - 35 years old and smoke
  - Have migraines with auras
  - Have hypertension
  - Have a history of blood clots or clotting disorders
- Decreased risk of developing endometrial cancer, ovarian cancer, and pelvic inflammatory disease;
- Decrease in side effects associated with estrogen such as nausea, headaches, breast tenderness, and elevated blood pressure.

**RISKS:**
Do not use POPs if:
- You are or suspect that you may be pregnant;
- Currently have breast cancer.

**Talk to your Nurse Practitioner if your medical history includes:**
- Unexplained vaginal bleeding;
- Breast cancer;
- Active viral hepatitis or cirrhosis of the liver;
- Usage of anti-seizure medications;
- Breastfeeding less than six weeks.

These medical conditions need to be considered when deciding if the pill is right for you.

**Possible Serious Side Effects:**
Ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy in the tube) and ovarian cysts are the most serious possible side effects.

**Possible Minor Side Effects:**
The following changes would typically occur in the first few months of use and improve with time. Many women never experience any of these side effects:
- Menstrual changes. Irregular bleeding is common. Bleeding is usually light spotting but not always predictable;
- Breast tenderness. Despite lack of estrogen, progestin causes breast tenderness in some women;
- Headaches, moodiness, depression, and changes in sex drive.

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GETTING STARTED:
With POPs, all 28 days of the pill pack contain hormones. There are no hormone-free pills. Take one pill every day at the same time until you finish all the pills. Go directly into your next pack. Correct pill taking improves the effectiveness of POPs.

**First Day Start:** You will start your first pack of pills on the first day of your next period.

**Quick Start:** You will take your first pill today.

**Sunday Start:** Begin your pills on the first Sunday after your period begins.

**Back-up Method:**
For pills to prevent pregnancy, you must take them correctly. We recommend the use of a second method of birth control (e.g., condoms) until you are confident in your pill taking routine.

**Irregular Bleeding:**
Remember irregular spotting is very common on POPs. Do not stop taking your pills. Irregular bleeding usually improves over time.

**Late Pills (less than 24 hours):**
Pills should be taken at about the same time every day (within two hours). If you forget to take a pill, take it as soon as you remember. Take your next pill at the correct time. Use your back-up method!

**Missed Pills (more than 24 hours):**
If you miss one or more pills you are at an increased risk for pregnancy. Immediately begin to use your back-up method. Start taking your pills again and use your back-up method of birth control until you have taken seven days of pills correctly.

**The pills are less effective when:**
- Taking certain antibiotics, anti-seizure medications, and St. John’s Wart;
- You vomit within two hours of taking a hormone pill, or you have repeated or severe vomiting or diarrhea;
- During these times, use your back-up method!

**Bleeding Patterns:**
Women on POPs usually have light, unpredictable spotting. Some women have no spotting. Other women have bleeding that happens monthly. All of these bleeding patterns are considered normal. However, irregular bleeding patterns can make it difficult to know if you are pregnant while taking POPs. If you are concerned about or have a change in your bleeding pattern, call the clinic.

**POPs AND FUTURE PREGNANCY**
POPs do not change your ability to get pregnant in the future. After stopping POPs, most women return to regular menstrual cycles immediately. If you stop taking your pills and do not desire pregnancy, use another method of birth control. If you do desire pregnancy, you may stop taking your pills and begin taking 400mcg of Folic Acid. Folic Acid is important in preventing certain birth defects in babies.

Client signature: ______________________________________________________ Date: _____________

I witness that the client received this information, said she read and understood it, and had an opportunity to ask questions.

Witness signature: ______________________________________________________ Date: _____________