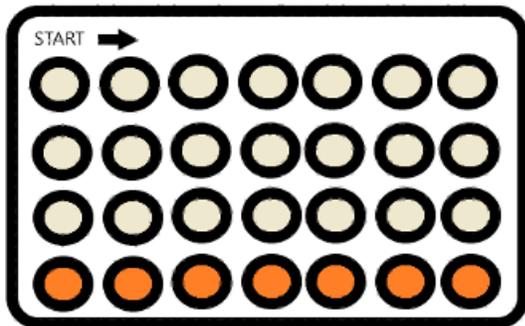




## How to Take Hormonal Medication “Continuously” to Suppress Your Period

- If your pill pack has 28 pills and the last row is a different color (like the picture below)

- In this pack, the first 21 pills contain hormones and the last 7 pills have no hormones (some people call these last 7 pills “placebos” or “sugar pills”)
- Start the pills when you have been instructed
- Take one pill every day at the same time
- Take the pills, in order, for the first 21 days
- Throw away the pills that are a different color in the last week of the pack
- Start a new pack of pills
- You will never have a day when you don’t take a pill



- Some pill packs have a different number of pills in the pack or a different number of placebos (4 or 2), or no placebos at all. **If your pills look different than the picture, that is okay!** You will need to ask your healthcare provider which pills have hormones in them and which pills you should throw away, but you can still take them continuously.
- You can also use the combined hormonal **patch** without breaks (apply one patch per week) or the combined hormonal **vaginal ring** without breaks (change the ring every 4 weeks).

### Why would I want to take pills continuously (without breaks)?

- To extend time between periods, to aim for no menstrual bleeding, or to treat other symptoms that only happen during your period
- Many teens and young adults are prescribed hormonal medication without breaks for medical reasons, including:
  - irregular or heavy menstrual bleeding
  - severe pain with periods
  - acne
  - headaches or other symptoms that occur only during periods
  - premenstrual syndrome (PMS)
  - polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)
- **The most common side effect of taking hormonal medicine without breaks is unpredictable light bleeding - this is usually not serious!** If this kind of bleeding happens a lot, talk to your healthcare provider.
- Side effects are similar for continuous or cyclic hormonal medication and include: headaches, nausea, breast tenderness, appetite changes, and the small but serious side effect of blood clots (which is higher for medications that contain estrogen). Most people have no side effects, and if they do, side effects are usually mild, but everyone is different.
- Taking hormone medicine like this without breaks does not affect your ability to get pregnant in the future.
- Contact your healthcare provider if you have any questions about taking hormonal medicine continuously (without breaks).

This document was created and approved by the NASPAG Education Committee, February 2025