

Faculty of Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare Clinical Effectiveness Unit

Switching or Starting Methods of Contraception

This quick guide advises on effective starting or switching between contraceptive methods to reduce the risk of unplanned pregnancy. It summarises information from existing FSRH guidance documents. This guide should be used in conjunction with clinical judgment in individual situations.

Key to Symbols:



= start method immediately; condoms (or abstinence) not required



= start method, additional condom use (number of days given)



= do not start method

QS = consider 'quickstarting' a method


















Key to abbreviations:














CHC – combined hormonal contraception (pills, ring, patch)
Cu-IUD – copper intrauterine device
DMPA – depot medroxyprogesterone acetate
EC – emergency contraception
HFI – hormone free interval
LNG-IUS – levonorgestrel-releasing intrauterine system
QS - quickstarting
POP – progestogen-only pill
PT – pregnancy test
UPSI – unprotected sexual intercourse










'Quickstarting'

































Quickstarting describes starting contraception at the time a woman presents (rather than waiting for the next menstrual cycle). This may be at any time in the cycle, including while bleeding, or immediately after emergency contraception as long as it is reasonably certain the woman is not pregnant. This may be outside the licence of some products. This may mean the use of a different 'bridging' method until pregnancy can be excluded and the preferred method initiated.












For further information see FSRH guidance on Quickstarting











CURRENT SITUATION	Starting:					
No recent hormonal contraception:	CHC	POP	DMPA	Implant	LNG-IUS	Cu-IUD
Day 1-5 of natural cycle (regardless of UPSI)						
After day 5 of natural cycle, if no UPSI since LMP <i>OR</i> amenorrhoea, if no UPSI for >3 weeks and PT negative	 for 7 days	 for 2 days	 for 7 days	 for 7 days	 for 7 days	
After day 5 of natural cycle, if UPSI since LMP <i>OR</i> amenorrhoea, if UPSI in last 3 weeks and PT negative <i>consider the need for EC</i>	QS  for 7 days PT at 3 weeks	QS  for 2 days PT at 3 weeks	QS another bridging method or QS  for 7 days PT at 3 weeks	QS  for 7 days PT at 3 weeks	X QS another bridging method	if all UPSI in last 5 days or if within 5 days of earliest likely ovulation  If not X QS another bridging method






CURRENT METHOD	Switching to:					
Combined hormonal contraception: (if taken correctly)	CHC	POP	DMPA	Implant	LNG-IUS	Cu-IUD
CHC week 2-3, or day 1-2 of HFI					 If day 2 of HFI follow advice for day 3-7 below	
CHC week 1 or day 3-7 of HFI AND no UPSI since start of HFI	 for 7 days	 for 2 days	 for 7 days	 for 7 days	 for 7 days	
CHC week 1 or day 3-7 of HFI if UPSI since start of HFI	Continue CHC until taken for 7 consecutive days then advice as for weeks 2 or 3					

Progestogen only methods:	CHC	POP	DMPA	Implant	LNG-IUS	Cu-IUD
Implant (in situ for <3 years)	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺
DMPA <14 weeks since last injection	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺
DMPA >14 weeks since last injection and no UPSI since 14 weeks	 for 7 days	 for 2 days	 for 7 days	 for 7 days	 for 7 days	☺
DMPA >14 weeks and UPSI since 14 weeks <i>consider the need for a PT and EC</i>	QS  for 7 days PT at 3 weeks	QS  for 2 days PT at 3 weeks	QS another bridging method OR QS  7 days PT at 3 weeks	QS  for 7 days PT at 3 weeks	Unless able to exclude pregnancy, X QS another bridging method	If only UPSI since expiry was in last 5 days ☺ If UPSI since expiry was > 5 days ago, and unable to exclude pregnancy X QS another bridging method

Traditional POP (if taken correctly)	 for 7 days		 for 7 days	 for 7 days	 for 7 days	
Desogestrel POP (if taken correctly)						
Intra-uterine contraception:	CHC	POP	DMPA	Implant	LNG-IUS	Cu-IUD
LNG-IUS (in date) If no UPSI in last 7 days	 for 7 days	 for 2 days	 for 7 days	 for 7 days		
LNG-IUS (in date) UPSI in last 7 days	Retain IUD for 7 days after starting	Retain IUD for 2 days after starting	Retain IUD for 7 days after starting	Retain IUD for 7 days after starting	Ideally abstain for 7 days prior to change in case new device can't be inserted	
IUD day 1-5						
IUD after day 5 (no UPSI in last 7 days)	 for 7 days	 for 2 days	 for 7 days	 for 7 days	 for 7 days	
IUD after day 5 (UPSI in last 7 days)	Retain IUD for 7 days after starting	Retain IUD for 2 days after starting	Retain IUD for 7 days after starting	Retain IUD for 7 days after starting	Abstain for 7 days prior to change, then  for 7 days	Ideally abstain for 7 days prior to change in case new device can't be inserted then 

CURRENT SITUATION	CHC	POP	DMPA	Implant	LNG-IUS	Cu-IUD
<p>Incorrect use of existing hormonal method or method has expired</p> <p>if no UPSI for >3 weeks and PT negative</p>	 for 7 days	 for 2 days	 for 7 days	 for 7 days	 for 7 days	
<p>Incorrect use of existing hormonal method or method has expired</p> <p>if UPSI in last 3 weeks and PT negative</p> <p><i>consider the need for EC</i></p>	<p>QS</p>  for 7 days	<p>QS</p>  for 2 days	<p>QS</p> <p>another bridging method</p> <p>or</p> <p>QS</p>  for 7 days	<p>QS</p>  for 7 days	<p>QS</p> <p>QS</p> <p>another bridging method</p>	<p>if all UPSI in last 5 days or if within 5 days of earliest likely ovulation</p>  <p>If not</p> <p>QS</p> <p>QS</p> <p>another bridging method</p>
	<p>PT at 3 weeks</p>	<p>PT at 3 weeks</p>	<p>PT at 3 weeks</p>	<p>PT at 3 weeks</p>		

CURRENT SITUATION	Starting:					
After emergency contraception:	CHC	POP	DMPA	Implant	LNG-IUS	Cu-IUD
Ulipristal (ellaOne®)	Do not start any hormonal contraception for 5 days after ellaOne					If all UPSI within 5 days or if less than 5 days after earliest likely date of ovulation  If not 
5 days after ulipristal (ellaOne®)	QS  for 7 days PT at 3 weeks	QS  for 2 days PT at 3 weeks	QS another bridging method. OR  QS for 7 days PT at 3 weeks	QS  for 7 days PT at 3 weeks	 Consider QS another bridging method	If all UPSI within 5 days or if less than 5 days after earliest likely date of ovulation  If not  and consider QS another bridging method

Levonorgestrel 1500mcg	<p>QS for 7 days  PT at 3 weeks</p>	<p>QS for 2 days  PT at 3 weeks</p>	<p>QS another bridging method OR QS  for 7 days PT at 3 weeks</p>	<p>QS  for 7 days PT at 3 weeks</p>	<p>X Consider QS another bridging method</p>	<p>If all UPSI within 5 days or if less than 5 days after earliest likely date of ovulation  If not X and QS another bridging method</p>
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