

# Side Effects

## Head/Brain

- Cerebral hemorrhage (bleeding into the cranial cavity) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Cerebral thrombosis (blood clot that drains blood from the brain) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Melasma, which may persist (skin discoloration; usually dark, irregular patches) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Migraine <sup>4,7,8</sup>
- Headache <sup>4,7,8</sup>
- Dizziness <sup>7,8</sup>
- Loss of scalp hair <sup>7,8</sup>
- Acne <sup>4,7,8</sup>

## Eyes

- Retinal thrombosis (blockage of the central retinal vein that carries blood away from the eye) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Change in corneal curvature (steepening of the cornea) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Intolerance to contact lenses <sup>7,8</sup>
- Cataracts <sup>7,8</sup>

## Heart/Blood

- Thrombophlebitis and venous thrombosis with or without embolism (blood clots in the veins) <sup>4,7,8</sup>
- Hypertension (high blood pressure) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Mesenteric thrombosis (blood clot in the major veins that drain blood from the intestine) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Hemorrhagic eruption (bleeding eruption) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Arterial thromboembolism (blood clots in the heart) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Pulmonary embolism (arterial blockage, usually from a blood clot, that cuts off one lung's blood supply) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Myocardial infarction (heart attack) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Budd-Chiari Syndrome (closing of the veins that carry deoxygenated blood from the lower half of the body into the heart) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Hemolytic uremic syndrome (kidney failure and low platelet count in the blood) <sup>7,8</sup>

## Mental

- Mental depression <sup>4,7,8</sup>
- Nervousness <sup>7,8</sup>

## Whole Body

- Changes in libido (usually decreased libido) <sup>4,7,8</sup>
- Edema (increased fluid and subsequent pressure within an organ) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Change in weight (increase or decrease) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Rash (allergic reaction) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Pre-menstrual syndrome <sup>7,8</sup>
- Hirsutism (excessive hair growth in places where hair normally is minimal or absent) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Erythema multiforme (allergic reaction) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Erythema nodosum (skin inflammation) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Porphyria (disease that can manifest itself as anything from acute mania, including hallucinations, to constipation and skin rashes) <sup>4,7,8</sup>
- Bone loss <sup>2</sup>
- Cancer (breast, uterine and vaginal) <sup>4</sup>

## Stomach/Intestines

- Gallbladder disease (bile duct stones) <sup>4,7,8</sup>
- Hepatic adenomas or benign liver tumors <sup>7,8</sup>
- Nausea <sup>7,8</sup>
- Vomiting <sup>7,8</sup>
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (such as abdominal cramps and bloating) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Cholestatic jaundice (jaundice caused by thickened bile) <sup>4,7,8</sup>
- Reduced tolerance to carbohydrates <sup>7,8</sup>
- Changes in appetite <sup>7,8</sup>
- Impaired renal function (impaired kidney function) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Colitis (digestive disease characterized by inflammation of the colon) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Hemolytic uremic syndrome (kidney failure and low platelet count in the blood) <sup>7,8</sup>

## Pregnancy

- Typical use of combined oral contraceptive pills prevents a diagnosed pregnancy in only 90 to 96 percent of women, which means that four to 10 women out of every 100 using the pill for one year will have a diagnosed pregnancy. <sup>4,6,10</sup>
- The pill's third mechanism is to change the lining of the endometrium (the lining of the womb), which creates a hostile environment for a newly created human being. The tiny baby cannot implant and is spontaneously aborted by the body. <sup>4,5,6,11,12</sup>
- As quoted in the booklet *Does the Birth Control Pill Cause Abortions?* by Randy Alcorn, a representative of the Ortho-McNeil pharmaceutical company said, "If you end up with a fertilized egg [new human being], it [the baby boy or girl] won't implant and grow because of the less hospitable endometrium." <sup>1</sup>
- "It seems unlikely that implantation would be possible in the altered endometrium developed under the influence of most of the suppressants [of ovulation]." <sup>3</sup>
- Ectopic pregnancy <sup>4</sup>
- Drugs that are known to interact with the pill to cause an increased likelihood of pregnancy:
  - Rifampin <sup>7,8</sup>
  - Drugs used for epilepsy, such as barbiturates <sup>7,8</sup>
  - Phenobarbital <sup>7,8</sup> (anticonvulsant; can also be used as anti-anxiety medication)
  - Topiramate (TOPAMAX<sup>®</sup> <sup>7,8</sup>; prescribed for migraines and, in higher doses, for Chiari patients)
  - Carbamazepine (Tegretol<sup>®</sup> <sup>7,8</sup> is one brand; anticonvulsant medication)
  - Phenytoin (Dilantin<sup>®</sup> <sup>7,8</sup> is one brand; anti-seizure medication)
  - Phenylbutazone (Butazolidin<sup>®</sup> <sup>7,8</sup> is one brand; nonsteroid, anti-inflammatory medication)
- Certain drugs used in the treatment of HIV or AIDS <sup>7,8</sup>
- Certain antibiotics <sup>7,8</sup>
- St. John's wort <sup>7,8</sup>

## Impact on Reproductive Organs

- Breakthrough bleeding <sup>4,7,8</sup>
- Spotting <sup>4,7,8</sup>
- Change in menstrual flow <sup>4,7,8</sup>
- Amenorrhea (absence of menstrual periods) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Temporary infertility after discontinuation of treatment <sup>4,7,8</sup>
- Breast changes: tenderness, enlargement, secretion <sup>7,8</sup>
- Change in cervical erosion and secretion <sup>7,8</sup>
- Decrease in lactation when given immediately postpartum <sup>7,8</sup>
- Vaginal candidiasis (yeast infection) <sup>4,7,8</sup>
- Cystitis-like syndrome (frequent urination, sometimes with a painful bladder) <sup>7,8</sup>
- Vaginitis (inflammation of the vaginal area, often associated with irritation, itching or infection) <sup>4,7,8</sup>

- Increased risk of sexually transmitted diseases <sup>4</sup>
- Cancer (breast, uterine and vaginal) <sup>4</sup>
- Endometriosis <sup>4</sup>

## Environmental

- Researchers have found that caged adult trout exposed to ethynylestradiol, a synthetic estrogen, were half as fertile as fish kept in clean water. The trout were exposed to the estrogen for two months, and then bred with a healthy female. <sup>13</sup>
- Doug Myers, a wetlands and habitat specialist for the Puget Sound Action Team, said that scientists are "finding the presence of female hormones making the male species less male" in frogs, river otters and fish. <sup>5,13</sup>
- "Scientists in western Washington found that synthetic estrogen - a common ingredient in oral contraceptives - drastically reduces the fertility of male rainbow trout." <sup>5</sup>
- After randomly netting 123 trout downstream from a Boulder Creek sewer treatment facility, including 101 female trout, 12 male trout and 10 "intersex" trout (having both male and female traits), scientists in Colorado discovered that "estrogens and other steroid hormones from birth-control pills and patches" caused the fish's genetic alteration. <sup>5</sup>

## Spiritual

- A couple taking the pill: "Hence to use this divine gift [the sexual act] while depriving it [taking contraception], even if only partially, of its meaning and purpose, is equally repugnant to the nature of man and of woman, and is consequently in opposition to the plan of God and His holy will." <sup>9</sup>

## Relationship

- Depression <sup>7,8</sup>
- Changes in libido (usually decreased libido) <sup>4,7,8</sup>
- Ways in which the pill destroys relationships:
  - It easily opens the door for marital infidelity;
  - it especially opens the door for temptation to youth;
  - "a man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman, and... reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection." <sup>9</sup>

## References:

- 1 Randy Alcorn, [Does the Birth Control Pill Cause Abortions?](#) (Gresham, OR: Eternal Perspective Ministries, 1998), 29-30 (online condensation by Randy Alcorn; accessed April 14, 2008).
- 2 O.S. Tang et al., "Long-term depo-medroxyprogesterone acetate and bone mineral density," *Contraception* 59 (1999): 351-355.
- 3 A.G. Gilman et al., eds., *Goodman and Gilman's The Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics*, 8th ed. (New York, NY: Pergamon Press, 1990), 1405
- 4 Bogomir M.Kuhar, PharmD, FASCP, *Infant Homicides through Contraceptives*, 5th ed. (Bardstown, KY: Eternal Life, 2003).
- 5 Wayne Laugesen, "[Contracepting the environment- Birth-control poisoning of streams leave U.S. environmentalists mum](#)," *National Catholic Register*, July 11, 2007, (accessed April 13, 2008).
- 6 [MICROMEDEX](#) (online collection of drug databases available only to medical professionals), (Depo-Provera Monograph, Vol. 85, 1995).
- 7 Ortho-McNeil Pharmaceutical, Inc., patient package insert: "[Ortho Tri-Cyclen /Ortho-Cyclen Tablets \(norgestimate/ethinyl estradiol\)](#)," (Manati, Puerto Rico: Janssen Ortho, LLC, July 2007), (accessed April 13, 2008).
- 8 Ortho-McNeil Pharmaceutical, Inc., patient package insert: "[Ortho Tri-Cyclen Lo Tablets](#)," (Raritan, New Jersey: Ortho-McNeil Pharmaceutical, Inc., June 2004), (accessed April 13, 2008).
- 9 Pope Paul VI, *Encyclical Letter [Humanae Vitae](#)*, Vatican: The Holy See, July 25, 1968, (accessed April 13, 2008).
- 10 Ralf Rahwan, *Chemical Contraceptives, Interceptives and Abortifacients*(Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University College of Pharmacy, Division of Pharmacology, 1995).
- 11 S.G. Somkuti et al., "The effect of oral contraceptive pills on markers of endometrial receptivity," *Fertility and Sterility* 65, no. 3 (March 1996): 484-488.
- 12 Walter L. Larimore, MD and Joseph B. Stanford, MD, MSPH, "[Postfertilization Effects of Oral Contraceptives and Their Relationship to Informed Consent](#)," *Archives of Family Medicine* 9 (2000):126-133, (accessed April 14, 2008).
- 13 Lisa Stiffler, "[Birth control may be harming state's salmon: Synthetic estrogen in water seems to affect reproduction](#)," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, June 4, 2003, (accessed April 13, 2008).