

Female Athlete Education.

HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION: THE BASICS

What are hormonal contraceptives?

Hormonal contraceptives are medications or devices containing synthetic oestrogen and/or progesterone to **prevent an unplanned pregnancy**.

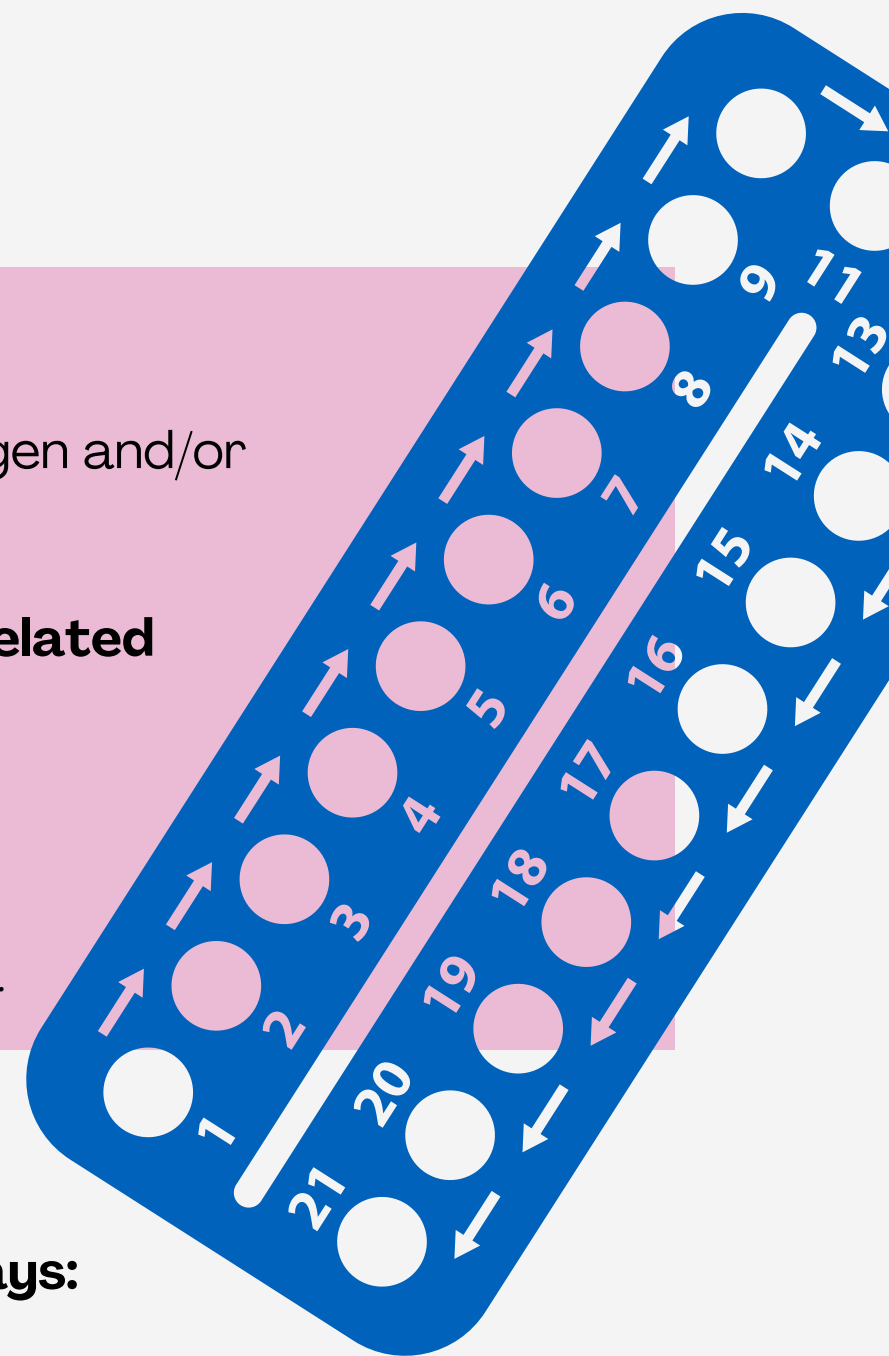


They are commonly used by female athletes to **manage menstrual cycle-related symptoms** (e.g., abdominal cramps)*



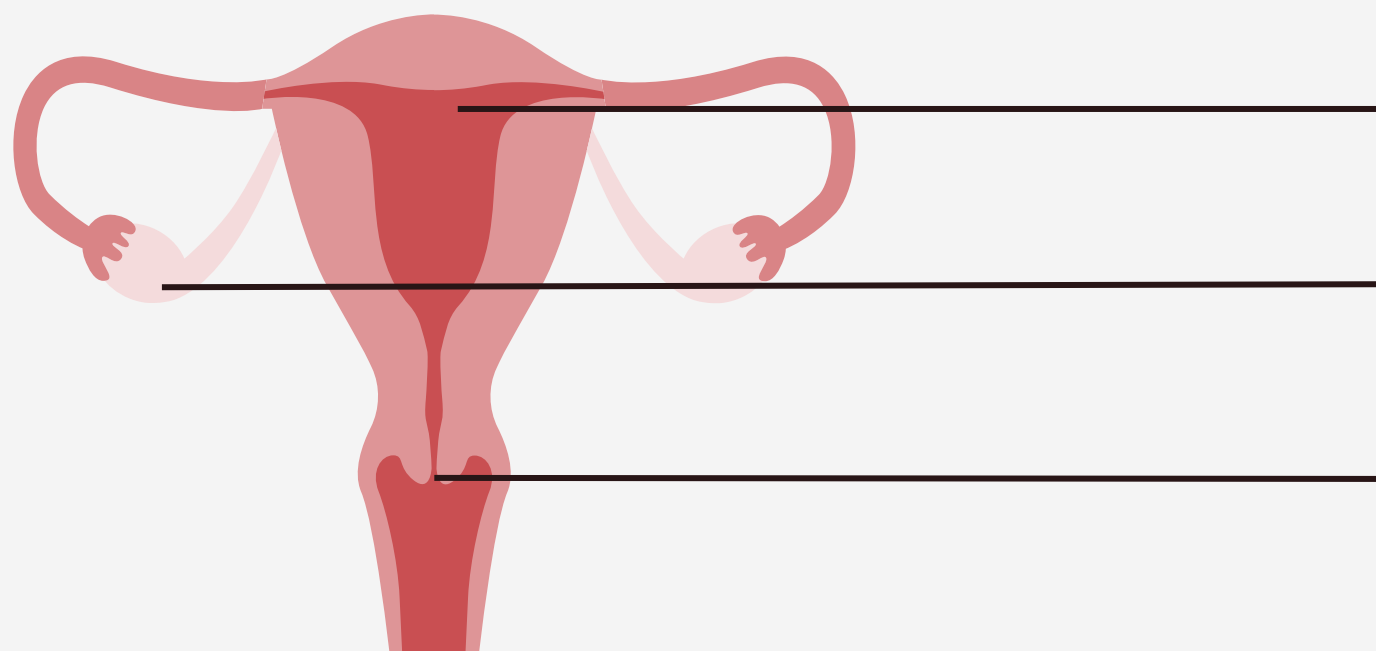
Sometimes, female athletes use hormonal contraceptives to **modify bleeding** (e.g., to avoid bleeding during important competitions etc.)*

*Reminder: Please seek medical guidance from a doctor/GP before deciding to use hormonal contraceptives.



How do hormonal contraceptives work?

Generally, hormonal contraceptives can prevent pregnancy in **three different ways**:



Thin uterine lining:

Creates an unfriendly environment for a fertilised egg to implant and develop.

Prevent ovulation:

Prevents ovary from releasing an egg each cycle.

Thicken cervical mucus:

Makes it difficult for sperm to pass through the cervix.

Hormonal contraceptives **change your natural menstrual cycle** depending on the type. For example, you may not experience the typical rise and fall of natural oestrogen and progesterone observed in a menstrual cycle!

There are **various types of hormonal contraceptives** such as the combined pill, intrauterine system, and the implant (and much more), which deliver hormones in different ways (e.g., orally, through the skin or muscle etc.) For more information on the different types, see 'Hormonal Contraception: The Different Types'.

The bleed you may experience on hormonal contraceptives is not your period, it is known as a **withdrawal bleed**.

Where to get advice on hormonal contraceptives?

It is essential to consult with a **healthcare professional** regarding hormonal contraceptive options to help you make informed decisions that prioritise your health and safety. If you experience any **unwanted side effects**, don't hesitate to contact your healthcare professional to explore alternative options. These may include your GP, gynaecologist, pharmacist, or family planning clinic.

Useful links (Ireland): <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/> and <https://www.mycontraception.ie/>

