

Oral Contraceptives Toolkit

When used consistently and correctly, oral contraceptives (OCs) are among the most effective methods for preventing unwanted pregnancies. OCs are safe for most women of reproductive age and are used by more than 100 million women worldwide. Many women like OCs because they are controlled by the woman, they can be stopped any time without a provider's help, and they do not interfere with sex. In addition, community health workers can provide OCs, making them accessible to women who do not have access to a health facility.

The **Oral Contraceptives Toolkit** is designed to meet the changing needs of health policy makers, program managers, and service providers. The Toolkit is updated regularly and houses state-of-the-art scientific evidence, programmatic guidance, and implementation tools for providing combined oral contraceptives (COCs), which contain both estrogen and progestin, and progestin-only pills (POPs).

Please visit K4Health's Emergency Contraception Toolkit for information on emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs).

Browse the topics by clicking on the thematic navigation menu on the right. Many items in the toolkit can be adapted for use in specific country contexts and unique program circumstances.

How have you used the Oral Contraceptives Toolkit in your work? Are there new resources or topic areas that should be included in the toolkit? Share your suggestions, comments, and questions by sending a message through our feedback form.

Are You??	You can use the Oral Contraceptives Toolkit to?
An advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access OC advocacy tools and essential information• Learn about and evaluate existing family planning policies and services that support OC provision• Generate and share ideas for advocating policy change with other advocates

Are You??

You can use the Oral Contraceptives Toolkit to?

A donor

- Learn about key issues in family planning program management and

A policymaker

- Learn essential facts about COCs and POPs
- Find examples of policies and service delivery guidelines that support

A program manager

- View models for implementing and strengthening family planning pro
- Access job aids, curricula, and other training tools
- Peruse materials for effective health communication and social mark

A service provider

- Access counseling tools, job aids, and service delivery guidelines
- View materials for effective health and behavior change communicat



What is the purpose of the Oral Contraceptives Toolkit?

What types of resources are included in this Toolkit?

Who should use this Toolkit?

Who developed this Toolkit?

How do I start using this Toolkit?

How can I suggest a resource for this Toolkit?

How can I make a comment or give feedback about this Toolkit?

What are K4Health Toolkits?

K4Health Toolkits are electronic collections of carefully selected resources where health policy makers, program managers, and service providers can find information about specific topics. They are continuously updated to capture additional resources and to identify and fill information gaps.

What is the purpose of the Oral Contraceptives Toolkit?

Oral contraceptives are among the most popular contraceptive methods in the world ? used by more than 100 million women globally. Taken consistently and correctly, they are also among the most effective methods. This Toolkit contains resources selected by K4Health staff to help policy makers, program managers, service providers, and other audiences update, expand, or develop oral contraceptive services.

What types of resources are included in this Toolkit?

This Toolkit provides a one-stop source for reliable, relevant, and useful information pertaining to oral contraceptives. The resources were selected with health policy makers, program managers, and service providers in mind. The Toolkit contains:

- Up-to-date background and reference materials to design evidence-based, state-of-the-art programs
- Job aids and other tools to increase the effectiveness and quality of program activities and services
- PowerPoint presentations that can be downloaded and adapted to local circumstances and languages
- A variety of publication formats: books, manuals, briefs, case studies, fact sheets, newsletters, pamphlets, posters, project reports, reviews, teaching and training materials, photos, tools, and job aids

Who should use this Toolkit?

- **Policy makers** will find research and information to help set national guidelines about oral contraceptives and plan for future changes in service delivery.
- **Program managers** will find information and job aids to help them develop a strategy to respond to the demand for oral contraceptives.
- **Service providers** will find information and job aids to help them counsel their clients about the proper use of oral contraceptives.
- **Logistics managers** will find tools and resources to help maintain a steady flow of supplies and to respond quickly if shortages occur.
- **Communication professionals** can use the toolkit resources to explore strategies, media, and messages about oral contraceptives for potential users, current users, their partners, and communities.
- **Trainers** can review the latest training techniques and curricula for oral contraceptives.
- **Researchers** can create customized searches for scientific articles, reports, photos, and other materials relating to oral contraceptives.

Who developed this Toolkit?

FHI 360 and K4Health staff selected the resources based on a wide search for relevant published and grey literature from around the world. People from other organizations also contributed their experience and expertise to review the toolkit and ensure its relevance and usefulness:

- Elizabeth Westley, from Family Care International and chair of the International Consortium on Emergency Contraception
- Mônica Almeida, from BEMFAM
- Ricky Lu, from Jhpiego

How do I start using this toolkit?

Expanding access to and use of oral contraceptives requires a holistic approach?-involving accurate information; up-to-date policies and guidelines; high-quality training, supervision, and services; effective communication and marketing; and proper logistics. This toolkit provides information on all these elements and contains tools and resources to help you implement a variety of activities related to oral contraceptives.

To **browse** the content of this Toolkit, use the navigation to the right to view resources related to key program topics. You can also use the **search** box if you know what you are looking for or have a specific item in mind.

Resources in this Toolkit can be downloaded and adapted for teaching and training, research, advocacy, policy making, and program management purposes. Some of the tools are readily available in adaptable format (for example, Microsoft PowerPoint presentations or Word documents). We encourage you to alter and personalize these tools for your own use. (Please remember to credit the source.) If you do use these tools or adapt them, we would love to hear from you. Please e-mail us.

How can I suggest a resource for this Toolkit?

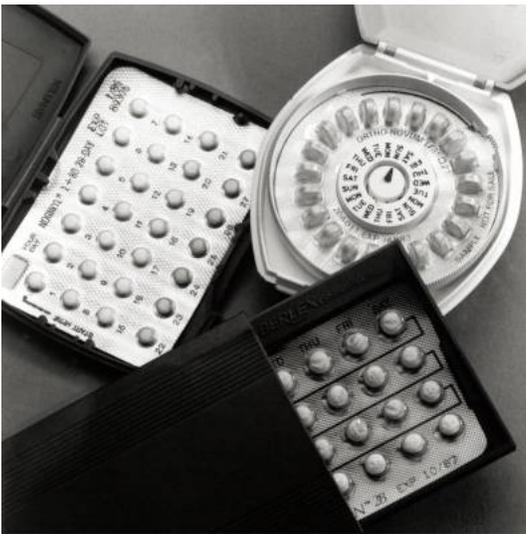
We invite you to contribute to the evolution and enhancement of this Toolkit. If you have developed or use high-quality resources that you think should be included here, please use the feedback form to suggest them. The Toolkit collaborators will review and consider your suggestions.

How can I make a comment or give feedback about this Toolkit?

If you have comments about the Toolkit, please send a message through the feedback form . Your feedback will help to keep the toolkit up-to-date and continually improving. For example, you can share ideas about how you have used the Toolkit in your work so that others can learn from and adapt your experiences.



Essential Knowledge



When used consistently and correctly, oral contraceptives (OCs) are among the most effective methods available for preventing unintended pregnancies. They are safe for most women of reproductive age and are used by more than 100 million women worldwide. The **Essential Knowledge** section of the Oral Contraceptives Toolkit offers evidence-based information and reference materials on the safety, effectiveness, acceptability, and medical eligibility criteria for the different types of oral contraceptives among women of reproductive age and special populations within this group including young people and people living with HIV.

Key Points about Combined Oral Contraceptives and Progestin-Only Pills

- COCs are pills, taken once a day, that contain low doses of progestin and estrogen. This prevents the release of eggs from the ovaries (ovulation). POPs, also taken once a day, contain low doses of progestin. This not only prevents ovulation but also thickens the cervical mucus, blocking sperm from meeting an egg.
- When taken correctly, COCs and POPs are highly effective, with less than 1 pregnancy per 100 women over the first year.
- With typical use, about 8 per 100 women using COCs will become pregnant over the first year. This means that 92 of every 100 women will *not* become pregnant.
- In addition to pregnancy prevention, COCs offer a number of health benefits. COCs:
 - protect against endometrial and ovarian cancer and pelvic inflammatory disease
 - might help protect against ovarian cysts and iron-deficiency anemia
 - can reduce menstrual cramps and bleeding problems, ovulation pain, excess facial or body hair, and symptoms of polycystic ovarian syndrome and endometriosis
- Once women stop using COCs or POPs, fertility returns immediately.
- COCs and POPs do not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. To protect against STIs, including HIV, women or couples who want to use COCs or POPs should use condoms consistently and correctly in addition to the oral contraceptives.
- Side effects of COCs and POPs can include changes in bleeding patterns, headaches, dizziness, nausea, breast tenderness, weight change, mood changes, abdominal pain, and acne. On very rare occasions, COCs can increase the risk of blood clots, stroke, and heart attack.

Please visit the Emergency Contraception Toolkit for similar information and materials on emergency contraceptive pills, which help prevent pregnancy when taken up to five days after unprotected sex.

Do you have a comment about this Toolkit or a resource you'd like to suggest for inclusion? Share your suggestions, comments, and questions by sending a message through the feedback form.

Resources:

- **Family Planning: A Global Handbook for Providers**

This handbook, based on WHO's Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive Use, offers clinic-based health care professionals the latest comprehensive guidance on providing family planning. Chapter 1 focuses on combined oral contraceptives (COCs) and includes information on all aspects of provision, including screening for medical eligibility, instructions for correct use, and explanations of common myths about COCs and how a provider can support continued use of the method. Chapter 2 focuses on providing progestin-only pills (POPs), paying special attention to breastfeeding women. Chapter 3 contains information on emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs) and includes information on safety and effectiveness, common misperceptions, and advice for working with women to support their use and to manage any problems they experience with the method.

Translations of the handbook are available in nine languages (see links below) and are planned for as many as 10 languages:

- Arabic [2011 Edition]
- English [2018 Edition]
- Farsi [2011 Edition]
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The Pill Fact Sheet

This fact sheet contains information about oral contraceptive pills for non-medical professionals.

Progestin Only/ Mini-Pill Fact Sheet

This fact sheet contains information about the progestin only/ mini-pill for non-medical professionals.

Beyond Birth Control: The Overlooked Benefits Of Oral Contraceptive Pills

This article discusses how oral contraceptive pills (OCPs) offer additional and immediate health benefits beyond just preventing pregnancy. It explains that OCPs offer benefits to women who experience menstrual-related disorders including: severe menstrual pain (dysmenorrhea), excessive menstrual bleeding (menorrhagia), and it also has the potential to reduce acne and excess hair growth (hirsutism).

Service Delivery

Ensuring high-quality services is vital to any family planning program that provides oral contraceptives (OCs). A client who is considering starting a method needs to be informed



of the most appropriate contraceptive options and

then carefully screened to ensure she is medically eligible to use her chosen method.

If a woman chooses OCs, her health care provider needs to counsel her on the side effects and benefits and provide strategies to help her initiate and continue using the method effectively. For example, providers must be able to carefully explain what a client should do if she misses one or more pills. Counseling women about possible bleeding changes and other side effects with OC use is an important part of providing the method. Bleeding changes, in particular, are among the most common method-related reasons for women discontinuing hormonal contraceptive methods.

In addition to determining medical eligibility and counseling clients on OC use, service providers must also know how to properly store and manage OCs and how to promote OC use to the community. Family planning service providers must possess a range of knowledge and skills to effectively meet each client's unique needs.

The Service Delivery section of the Oral Contraceptives Toolkit houses counseling tools, job aids, and reference materials to help service providers perform these tasks. Many of these resources are also helpful for training service providers on OC provision and improving communication between providers and clients. These materials will help service providers:

- Counsel clients on a range of contraceptive options
- Determine whether a client is medically eligible to use OCs
- Counter myths and misinformation about OCs with effective counseling messages

- Instruct clients on how to use OCs correctly and on what to do if they miss pills
- Meet the unique family planning needs of clients living with HIV or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

Do you have a comment about this section of the Toolkit or a new resource you'd like to suggest? Please share your thoughts through the feedback form.

Counseling Tools & Job Aids

This section of the Oral Contraceptives Toolkit houses several tools and job aids to help service delivery providers counsel clients on a range contraceptive options, including oral contraceptives, and make a quick assessment of a woman's medical eligibility to begin using oral contraceptives and other methods of family planning.

Resources:

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Cue Cards for Counseling Adults on Contraception

The set of cue cards is designed to help a range of community- and facility-based providers to counsel adults on their contraceptive options. The cue cards address: Implants, Male Sterilization, Female Sterilization, Intrauterine Device (IUD), Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM), DMPA (injectables), Combined Oral Contraceptives (COCs), Progestin-Only Pills (POPs), Standard Days Method (SDM), Male Condom, Female Condom, and Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECPs). The provider can use the front side of the cards to give information about all available options and, after the client chooses a method, the provider turns to the back side to give specific instruction on use.

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Cue Cards for Counseling Adolescents on Contraception

The set of cue cards is designed to help a range of community- and facility-based providers to counsel adolescents and young people on their contraceptive options. The cue cards address: combined oral contraceptives, progestin-only pills, emergency contraception, male and female condoms, injectables, implants, intrauterine devices (IUDs), and the lactational amenorrhea method (LAM). The provider can use the front side of the cards to give information about all available options and, after the adolescent chooses a method, they turn to the back side to give specific instruction on use.

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Quick Reference Chart for the WHO Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive Use

The World Health Organization (WHO) develops detailed criteria that health care workers can follow to determine which contraceptive methods are medically suitable for their clients. These criteria are based on the most current scientific knowledge about the effectiveness, risks and benefits of various family planning methods, and they can help providers guide their clients in making safe and informed decisions. WHO periodically revises the criteria in response to recommendations made by an expert working group in response to new research findings.

FHI 360 created a quick reference guide, in the form of a chart, that summarizes the WHO medical eligibility criteria for combined oral contraceptives, the injectable contraceptive depot-medroxyprogesterone acetate (DMPA), progestin-only implants, copper intrauterine devices or a levonorgestrel intrauterine system (LNG-IUS). The 2016 version of the Medical Eligibility Criteria Quick Reference Chart includes a complete list of all conditions that WHO classifies as Category 3 (usually not recommended) and Category 4 (should not be used).

- ## Checklist for Screening Clients Who Want to Initiate Combined Oral Contraceptives

Based on the most recent version of the World Health Organization's *Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive Use*, this simple checklist can help both clinical and nonclinical health workers (including community health workers) screen women who have made an informed decision to use combined oral contraceptives. It consists of 17 questions that providers can ask a client to identify medical conditions that would prevent safe use of the pills or require further screening. The checklist also helps providers determine whether a woman may be pregnant. Guidance and directions, based on the woman's answers to the 17 questions, are included with the checklist.

- ## Medical Eligibility Criteria Wheel for Contraceptive Use

This wheel-shaped job aid is based on the most recent version of the World Health Organization's *Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive Use*. The wheel allows health care providers to make a quick assessment of a woman's medical eligibility to begin using oral contraceptives and other methods of family planning.



• **Do You Know Your Family Planning Choices? (Wall Chart)**

The most recent edition of the wall chart "Do You Know Your Family Planning Choices?" shows the different methods--including oral contraceptives--at a glance and lists their characteristics. The chart helps people interested in family planning to make informed decisions. Available in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese.

• **A Guide to Family Planning for Community Health Workers and Their Clients**

This flip chart is a tool to be used during family planning counseling or in group sessions with clients. It serves to:

- help your clients choose and use the method of family planning that suits them best;
- give you the information you need for high-quality and effective family planning counseling and care;
- help you know who may need referral.

• **Decision Making Tool for Family Planning Clients and Providers**

This flipchart is a decision-making aid for clients, a job aid and reference manual for providers, and a training resource. With one page for the client and a corresponding page for providers, it has helpful pictures, key points, and detailed reference information covering 14 family planning methods including COCs, POPs, and ECPs. It covers medical eligibility criteria, side effects, and when to start and how to use each method.

• **Comparing Effectiveness of Family Planning Methods**

This 1-page chart compares the effectiveness of various family planning methods, including oral contraceptives, and has a few key messages on how to make ones method more

effective which could be useful to providers and program managers alike.

- **Oral Contraceptive Pill: Tools for Creating Choice**

This package of materials contains communication tools and job aids to support women and men in choosing a contraceptive method.

Guidelines & Reference Materials

Nearly all women can use oral contraceptives (including combined oral contraceptives, progestin-only oral contraceptives, and emergency contraceptives) safely and effectively. The guidelines and handbooks included in this section of the Toolkit offer health care professionals the latest guidance on providing oral contraceptives, including:

- who can use oral contraceptives and when;
- instructions for correctly using oral contraceptives and what to do if one misses a pill;
- any potential side effects, health benefits or health risks related to using oral contraceptives; and
- strategies for overcoming medical barriers to the provision of oral contraceptives.

Resources:

- **Family Planning: A Global Handbook for Providers**

This handbook, based on WHO's Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive Use, offers clinic-based health care professionals the latest comprehensive guidance on providing family planning. Chapter 1 focuses on combined oral contraceptives (COCs) and includes information on all aspects of provision, including screening for medical eligibility, instructions for correct use, and explanations of common myths about COCs and how a provider can support continued use of the method. Chapter 2 focuses on providing progestin-only pills (POPs), paying special attention to breastfeeding women. Chapter 3 contains information on emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs) and includes information on safety and effectiveness, common misperceptions, and advice for working with women to support their use and to manage any problems they experience with the method.

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Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive Use, Fifth Edition

This document is part of the process for improving the quality of care in family planning. *Medical eligibility criteria for contraceptive use* (MEC), the first edition of which was published in 1996, presents current WHO guidance on the safety of various contraceptive methods for use in the context of specific health conditions and characteristics. This is the fifth edition of the MEC – the latest in the series of periodic updates

This edition is divided into two parts. Part I describes how the recommendations were developed and Part II contains the recommendations and describes how to use them. The recommendations contained within this document are based on the latest clinical and epidemiological data. Several tools and job aids are available from WHO and other sources to help providers use these recommendations in practice.

Ensuring Human Rights within Contraceptive Service Delivery: Implementation Guide

This implementation guide sets out core minimum actions that can be taken at different levels of the health system, and provides examples of implementation of the recommendations in the WHO guidelines.

Ensuring Human Rights in the Provision of Contraceptive Information and Services: Guidance and Recommendations

These WHO guidelines provide recommendations for programs as to how they can ensure that human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled, while services are scaled up to

reduce unmet need for contraception. Both health data and international human rights laws and treaties were incorporated into the guidance.

Training & Program Management



The successful management of any health program

requires a vast amount of knowledge and organization.

Many cadres of health professionals, including nurses, auxiliary nurse-midwives, physicians, pharmacists, and community health workers, can be trained to provide oral contraceptives. A successful training workshop for contraceptive providers requires careful planning and preparation. It is important that the planners and facilitators of the training understand the learning needs of the participants and adapt the training materials and methods accordingly. Initial training sessions should be followed up with supportive supervision to ensure quality service provision.

The Program Management section of the Oral Contraceptives Toolkit contains tools to help program managers:

- Understand and implement key elements of family planning programming that lead to success
- Design innovative new family planning programs
- Train and support diverse cadres of health professionals
- Assess, and strengthen existing family planning program models
- Set realistic goals for national, district, and facility-level family planning programming
- Expand contraceptive access and improve the quality of family planning services

For general family planning resources related to procurement, logistics and supply chain management, check out our Family Planning Logistics Toolkit.

Do you have a comment about this section of the Toolkit or a new resource you'd like to suggest? Please share your thoughts through the feedback form.

Resources:

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Checkpoints for Choice: A New Orientation and Resource Package for Ensuring Voluntary Family Planning Programs

This resource package offers practical guidance on how program planners and managers, policymakers, donors, service providers, and community leaders can strengthen clients' ability to make full, free, and informed contraceptive choices within a rights-based context.

- ## Training Resource Package for Family Planning: Combined Oral Contraceptives (COCs)

This module on **Combined Oral Contraceptives (COCs)** is designed for the providers in developing countries who most often are tasked with providing FP services—primarily nurses and nurse-midwives, as well as primary care physicians—and assume trainees will have at minimum a nurse's level of clinical training. Although the module can be used for Community Health Workers (CHWs), they would need basic literacy skills.

Designed to actively involve the trainees in the learning process, sessions include:

- PowerPoint presentations,
- simulation skills practice in the form of roleplays,
- discussions,
- case studies and practice, and
- using objective competency-based skills checklists.

- ## The SEED? Assessment Guide for Family Planning Programming

Grounded in EngenderHealth's SEED Programming Model?, this comprehensive, easy-to-use tool helps program managers and staff to identify strengths and weaknesses in their family planning (FP) programs that will inform the design or redesign of these interventions. The guide is intended for family planning program staff in technical organizations, ministries of health, donor agencies, and others working in family planning. To aid staff in assessing their programs, this user-friendly guide outlines a systematic approach that includes 25 key programming elements that are crucial to a holistic, robust FP program; sample outlines for a desk review and final report; and eight adaptable key informant discussion guides.

Health Communication



Effective communication activities in family planning

programs raise awareness about available contraceptive methods, including oral contraceptives (OCs); motivate women to seek methods; and help clients use their chosen method effectively. The **Health Communication** section of the Oral Contraceptives Toolkit contains tools and information to help donors, program managers, family planning promoters, and service providers build a supportive environment for OC use.

The resources included offer tips and guidelines to assist with well-informed and effective communication and promotion of oral contraceptives. Health care professionals can use a number of communication strategies to improve access to and effective use of OCs. Among these strategies are:

- **Information, Education, and Communication (IEC)**, a process of working with individuals, communities, and societies to develop context-appropriate communication strategies to promote healthful behaviors such as OC use among those who desire a modern contraceptive method. Please visit the **Service Delivery** page for counseling tools and job aids to enhance provider-client communication. For fact sheets and briefs on oral contraceptives, please visit the **Essential Knowledge** section of this Toolkit.
- **Behavior change communication (BCC)**, which involves IEC in addition to the provision of a supportive environment that will enable people to initiate and sustain safer behaviors such as correct and consistent OC use.
- **Social marketing**, a strategy in which programs develop contraceptive brands and market and sell the brands to a particular population through promotional campaigns. Using traditional marketing techniques, social marketing makes needed products available and affordable, while encouraging the adoption of healthier behavior. Social marketing has been used in many countries to ensure continued availability of affordable oral contraceptives.

To access family planning advocacy materials, please visit the Family Planning Advocacy Toolkit.

Do you have a comment about this Toolkit or a resource you'd like to suggest for inclusion? Share your suggestions, comments, and questions through the feedback form.

Resources:

- **Health Education Materials for the Workplace Toolkit**

This toolkit contains three types of materials to provide family planning messaging specifically for workplaces, including mini-posters, handouts, and supplemental materials.

- **The P-Process: Five Steps to Strategic Communication**

This brochure highlights the steps within the P-Process, a framework designed to guide communication professionals as they develop strategic communication programs. This step-by-step road map leads communication professionals from a loosely defined concept about changing behavior to a strategic and participatory program with a measurable impact on the intended audience.

- **Beyond Birth Control: The Overlooked Benefits Of Oral Contraceptive Pills**

This article discusses how oral contraceptive pills (OCPs) offer additional and immediate health benefits beyond just preventing pregnancy. It explains that OCPs offer benefits to women who experience menstrual-related disorders including: severe menstrual pain (dysmenorrhea), excessive menstrual bleeding (menorrhagia), and it also has the potential to reduce acne and excess hair growth (hirsutism).

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