**Video transcript- COC- How to take it**

Hello. You've decided that the combined pill is the most suitable method of contraception for you. The great news is you can start taking the pill anytime during your menstrual period as long as you are sure you are not pregnant.

Providing your menstrual cycle is more than every 23 days, starting the pill on days 1 to 5 of your period will mean you're immediately protected from pregnancy. If your cycle is less than 23 days, you may ovulate, or release an egg, earlier so talk to your nurse or doctor about whether you should use additional contraception to begin with. If you start taking the pill at any other time during your monthly cycle, so not between days 1 to 5 of your period, you will either need to avoid having sex or use additional contraception, such as condoms, for the first 7 days of pill-taking.

There are two main types of combined pill available.

With this type of pill, you take 1 pill a day, as shown on the pill packet, for 21 days. You then have 7 pill-free days, where you will have, what is known as, a "withdrawal bleed". It is not a period, but rather a bleed because you are not taking any hormones during this pill-free week. Sometimes you may not bleed during this pill-free week. This is normal and does not mean you are pregnant. But if you are worried, take a pregnancy test or visit your doctor or nurse for advice. After your pill-free week, start taking your daily pill again for a further 21 days. Do this regardless of whether or not you've had a withdrawal bleed, or even if you are still bleeding. Some women may choose to adapt the way they take their pill and take their pill packets "back-to-back". Taking the pill in this way is safe and it can avoid having a withdrawal bleed but should be discussed with your healthcare professional who can support you to do this safely, and effectively.

With everyday pills, there is a pill for you to take every day of the month. However, not every pill is the same. Some are placebo tablets which mean they do not contain any hormone and they usually look different as well. It is during the days when you take the placebo pill that you will get a withdrawal bleed. Everyday pills are available as some people find it easier to take a pill everyday without a break. However, it is essential to take each pill in the correct order.

With both types of pill, if you are late starting your next packet you will not be covered against pregnancy and may need to think about emergency contraception.

Whatever type of pill you take, get into a routine of taking the pill at the same time each day. Try downloading a pill-reminder App on your phone or taking it at the same time as you clean your teeth each morning.

If you have any questions about how to take your combined pill, please speak to your nurse, GP or sexual health adviser for further information.

www.unitysexualhealth.co.uk