**Video transcript- COC- Pros and Cons**

Hello. The combined oral contraceptive pill is taken by many women for contraception and control of their periods.

There are many benefits of the combined pill. If taken correctly it's over 99% effective.It can make periods more regular, lighter and less painful. It may help with symptoms of premenstrual syndrome (PMS). It can improve acne or spotty skin. It reduces the risk of developing cancer of the bowel, womb and ovary. It is possible to take packets back-to-back allowing greater control over your periods during important events such as holidays and exams.

There are some disadvantages associated with a combined pill. It relies on the user to remember to take it correctly in order for it to be effective. It occasionally makes women feel sick, causes headaches or makes their breasts more tender especially when first starting the pill. It can cause an increase in blood pressure so you need a blood pressure check every 6 months. It doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections and some women may experience bleeding between their periods known as "breakthrough bleeding" but this often settles down after the first few months of use. There is no evidence to suggest that the combined pill makes women gain weight. We know that some hormones can cause women to retain fluid and experience an increased appetite but as the newer contraceptive pills have lower doses of hormones this is less likely. The combined pill can have some serious side effects but luckily these are very rare.

It is important to discuss all potential risks and benefits with your doctor or nurse before deciding whether the pill is a suitable form of contraception for you. There is a very small increased risk of having a stroke or heart attack whilst taking the combined pill. This risk is higher in those who have other risk factors such as diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure or smoke over the age of 35. Some studies suggest there's a small increase in the risk of breast cancer and cervical cancer but the evidence is not straightforward and more research is needed. There is a well-established, but small, risk of developing a clot in your legs or in your lungs. However, the risk of developing a blood clot whilst taking the pill is lower than the risk of developing a blood clot when you are pregnant. Your risk of developing a clot is greatest during the 1st year of taking your pill and further increased if you smoke; are overweight; are immobile for long periods of time such as after surgery; or you, or an immediate family member, has had a clot in the past. Most women don't experience any problems whilst taking the combined pill but if you experience irregular bleeding or new headaches, see your nurse or doctor.

Remember that no pill will protect you from sexually transmitted diseases. Condoms should also be used to reduce the spread of infections. Also, don't forget that there is information in the box with your pills.

Alternatively your GP or local sexual health center can help you if you are worried about anything.

www.unitysexualhealth.co.uk