How to Get Off Hormonal Birth Control

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO DITCH YOUR HORMONAL CONTRACEPTIVES

by Samantha Gladish
HI AND WELCOME!

This eBook contains everything you need to know about ditching hormonal birth control.

My goal is to help you through this journey with ease, knowledge and accountability. As your hormone fixer-upper, I am dedicated to helping you understand your body, health and hormones so you can feel empowered to make better, healthier choices. Striving to achieve health and wellbeing is a process, which can include improvements and sometimes minor setbacks. The body needs time to re-adjust its settings, clear out waste materials and build new tissues in order to perform more effectively. I am here to support you through the process, answering your questions and providing any extra information you may need.

Take some time to read thoroughly through this eBook and take in all the information. I share my personal story with the pill, dive into WHY the pill is not the answer and the steps you need to take NOW if you’d like to come off the pill.

Cheers to happy, healthy hormones!

- Samantha Gladish, RHN

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All information contained in the Healthy Hormones for Woman program is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent health problems. For all serious health issues, please contact a medical or nutrition practitioner. The information provided in this program is based on the best knowledge of the author at the time of writing and we do not assume liability for the information within this program, be it direct or indirect, consequentially, special exemplary
My Story
MY STORY

I remember at the young age of 17 being in my doctors office explaining to him that my periods were irregular, I had headaches around my cycle, I was bloated and all around irritated.

I remember saying “Doc, I think I should go on the birth control pill.” He replied “absolutely! You can start today!” as he handed me a blue and pink pack of pills.

I remember specifically asking to go on the pill because it’s all I had ever heard about at school. All the other girls were doing it and had easy breezy cycles, so why wouldn’t I do it too!?

BIG mistake!

Going on the pill at the time seemed like the best option. Regular periods, not having to worry about pregnancy, taking the pill during my actual period so I could go swimming up at the cottage; this all seemed great to me at the time.

I was on the pill for about 8 years and suffered terrible migraines, tons of digestive issues and started to develop thinning hair. At the age of 17, I did not have the knowledge about my health, body and hormones as I do know.

I didn’t know I was taking synthetic hormones. I didn’t know I was stopping my body from ovulating. I didn’t know I was increasing my cancer risk. I didn’t know I was increasing my risk for infertility, PCOS and insulin resistance.

I didn’t know any of this.

I work with many women in my private practice that are looking to get off the pill because they want to conceive in the future, and I’m happy they come to me to help them reclaim their hormonal health.

Getting off the pill isn’t so easy breezy. It definitely has its downfalls, which is why I want to share with you how you can come off of it, the right way. Because, bottom line, you need a plan. Deciding to just stop the pill one day and get right in the sack with you partner to conceive is no-good in my books!

Maybe having babies isn’t even something your considering but have decided it’s time to come off the pill because you’re done with taking synthetic hormones, or you’re experiencing many negative side effects. Either way, it’s important to have a plan, work with someone who can effectively guide you through a customized program and take the appropriate supplements.
Here’s What You Really Need to Know About the Pill:

Before we dive into protocols, let’s understand some key factors and risks about the pill...

Here’s What You Really Need to Know About the Pill:

When you take birth control pills, you impose synthetic hormones on your natural cycle. Many birth control pills contain high levels of estrogen that effectively convince your pituitary gland that you are pregnant and that you don’t need to ovulate. Because your body thinks you are pregnant, the uterine lining thickens. Once you start the placebo pills, however, your estrogen level drops suddenly, and your body menstruates “normally.” This is actually called a “pill-bleed” and it not a regular period.

The birth control pill suppresses ovulation. If you aren’t ovulating, you’re throwing off your entire hormonal system. Regular ovulation means you are fertile, hormones are in check and your cells and endocrine system are happy and functioning well. Most women think they are getting a regular period while they are on the pill, but that couldn’t be farther from the truth.

This abnormal cycle is what millions of women experience every month, and yet few doctors discuss the consequences of taking these prescriptions year after year.

THERE ARE REAL RISKS

Here is an overview of the reported risks and side effects of birth control pills. Some physical and emotional changes take place that are permanent while you stay on the pill. Many of these changes occur as your body’s response to synthetic estrogen.

These changes include:

- Larger breasts
- Weight gain or loss
- Reduced or increased acne
- Slight nausea
- Emotional sensitivity right before your period
- Mood swings throughout your cycle
- Irregular bleeding or spotting
- Breast tenderness
- Decreased libido
HERE'S WHAT YOU REALLY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE PILL:

The above side effects might be enough to deter some women from taking birth control, but many women are just not aware of them, while others justify the side effects because the pill is so convenient.

Birth control pills are a prescription drug with very real ramifications and side effects on your overall health.

And even scarier than the “mild” side effects are the serious health risks that accompany birth control pills. These include:

- Increased risk of cervical and breast cancers
- Increased risk of heart attack and stroke
- Migraines
- Higher blood pressure
- Gall bladder disease
- Infertility
- Benign liver tumors
- Decreased bone density
- Yeast overgrowth and infection
- Increased risk of blood clotting
- Cancer
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Infertility
- PCOS
- Insulin Resistance

Surely these side effects make birth control pills a less than desirable option for contraception.

Birth control pills actually destroy the beneficial bacteria in your intestines, making you more susceptible to yeast overgrowth, lowered immunity and infection.

You see, having imbalanced hormones, headaches and issues with your cycle is a beautiful sign that something is up with your body.

Something is ‘off’ and needs your attention. By taking the birth control pill, you completely mask these symptoms. You end up shutting down how your endocrine (hormone) system functions and create deeper issues, not just with your hormones, but with digestion, brain function, fertility, immunity and so much more. You are risking the future of your health.
3 Reasons Why the Birth Control Pill is Ruining Your Health
MORE REASONS THE BIRTH CONTROL PILL IS RUINING YOUR HEALTH:

1. **Digestion** - taking synthetic hormones can actually affect the lining in your gut. This can lead to a host of problems, such as Crohn’s, leaky gut, allergies and a ton of digestive upsets. Feeling bloated, like your 6 months pregnant and can’t get rid of that gut? You could blame the pill.

2. **Immunity** - the pill, as with all pharmaceutical drugs and antibiotics also damage the gut lining, but they also impact your good bacteria in your gut. You see, your immune system ‘lives’ in your gut. You need healthy, thriving bacteria in order to have a strong immune system. This is why probiotics are so important for overall health and eating in a way that supports digestion and gut health.

3. **Mineral Deficiencies** - the pill robs you of minerals. This all goes back to gut health. Your gut actually absorbs and assimilates minerals for you, such as B12, zinc and magnesium. Without these, you could have serious issues with fertility and on top of that, you’re probably feeling exhausted, depleted, having thinning hair, cramping, and dull skin. This could also lead to estrogen dominance and even weight gain.
Let’s Dive into Protocols
*Please read thoroughly
IF YOU’RE CURRENTLY ON OR OFF THE PILL:

Whether you’ve been on the pill for 2 years, 5 years, 10 years or 20 years; or you’ve been off of it for years without properly supplementing; follow this protocol below. It’s important to start supplementing with these key nutrients as soon as possible: (*please keep in mind that you DO NOT need to use these exact brands mentioned below. They are the ones I like to use in my private practice, but you can use others and still get great benefits. I do not however recommend cheap and inexpensive Costco or Jamison brands.)

- **Zinc** – gets depleted while on the pill and is essential for estrogen metabolism (take 1 cap of Zinc Copper Balance by AOR).
- **B Vitamins** – also get depleted while on the pill. B vitamins are involved in every neurological process in the body. Plus, they are essential for hormonal balance, energy production, mental health and stress (take 1-2 caps of Basic B Complex by Thorne).
- **Vitamin C** – another important nutrient that gets depleted while taking the pill. Vitamin C is an important antioxidant that supports collagen production (hello gorgeous skin!), heart health, prenatal health and immunity (roughly 2000-4000mg per day of C+ Bioflavonoids by AOR).
- **Probiotics** – the pill can affect your gut flora, which can lead to a weaker immune system, digestive issues, gas and bloating. Your gut is like your second brain so it’s essential to keep it healthy (take 1 cap of at least 25 Billion Probiotic for 30-60 days, then 10-20 billion after that initial period. Brands I recommend are: NULife Therapeutics, Renew Life, Genestra, Progressive).
- **Magnesium** – this important mineral is involved in over 300 detoxification processes in the body and is essential for hormonal health, plus, its great for anxiety, sleep and irritability. It’s also great for menstrual cramps (take at least 400mg before bed. Brands I recommend are Designs for Health, CanPrev, AOR).
- **Fish Oil** – Your hormones need fat to function. These healthy omega 3’s help fight inflammation, support your heart, brain health, constipation, memory, skin and ovaries (EPA/DHA – Take 1000mg one or twice a day. Brands I like are: NutraSea, Nordic Naturals, Carlsons)

Start on the above supplements for AT LEAST 2 months BEFORE coming off the pill and continue taking these supplements for AT LEAST 4-6 months once off the pill (or longer). These supplements can be taken for long term and benefit your entire health, from head to toe.
WHY I USE JUICE PLUS

I personally recommend Juice Plus+ as a daily foundational supplement. It works like a multi + antioxidant complex + mineral complex ALL IN ONE. It would NOT replace the above supplements, however, it could replace the daily vitamin C. You can find out more about it at this link here – http://samanthagladish.canada.juiceplus.com

I have Juice Plus+ to have a hugely positive impact on clients of mine that are suffering with skin issues and digestive/gut issues. Daily dose is 2 caps from the 3-blend (red, green and purple bottle – for a total of 6 caps a day. You would start with 1 cap from each bottle for the first week and then increase to 2).

Juice Plus+ products are made from the juice powder concentrates and oils from 45 different fruits, vegetables and grains. While Juice Plus+ isn’t a substitute for eating fruits and vegetables, these whole food-based products support a healthy diet by offering a much wider variety of naturally occurring vitamins, along with antioxidants and phytonutrients found in fruits and vegetables. Every Juice Plus+ product is made from quality ingredients grown farm fresh, providing the natural nutrients your body needs.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR DIET?

I recommend you start first by taking the suggested supplements above AND work on cleaning up your diet. You see, your liver is your main detoxifying organ. It detoxifies everything that comes in your body, the pill being one of those things. Aside from detoxification, the liver also works to metabolize your hormones. So, when it comes to balancing hormones, your liver plays a very important role. You want to make sure you are eating clean, real, whole foods that supports the liver, such as:

- **Asparagus**: Rich source of folate, important for healthy cells, and high in glutathione, a vital antioxidant for detoxification.
- **Dandelion**: Stimulates the digestive juices. Helps to digest fats and supports the body’s natural detoxification processes.
- **Garlic**: Antibacterial, antiviral, anti-fungal, and anti-cancer. Garlic supports detoxification and is one of nature’s best antioxidants.
- **Nettle**: Rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals, including natural iron, nettle is fabulous for strengthening the liver, adrenals, and kidneys.
- **Sea Vegetables**: Dulse, nori, kelp, arame, and kombu all supply minerals and iodine to help support the thyroid and immune system.
- **Leafy Greens**: Kale, Swiss chard, spinach, bok choy, mustard greens, and watercress. Are all rich in magnesium, which is an important detoxifying mineral.
- **Fresh Herbs**: Parsley, cilantro, and basil are amazing chelators. They help bind to heavy metals and flush them from your system.
- **Super Foods**: Chlorella, spirulina, wheatgrass, chlorophyll, barley grass, and wild blue algae are incredibly supportive of the liver, gut, immune system and supply your body with vital nutrients.
WHAT ABOUT YOUR DIET?

If you’ve been a regular follower of mine, you know I’m all about Qualitarian Food. That is, choosing food in its natural form that are free from antibiotics, chemicals, hormones and pesticides. Load up on healthy fats, quality pasture raised protein, beans and legumes (if tolerated), a variety of leafy greens and vegetables, antioxidant rich fruit and starchy and non-starchy veggies. THIS is what your hormone balancing diet needs to look like, whether you are on the pill or not!

WHEN TO ACTUALLY COME OFF THE PILL:

Once you’ve got the supplements and diet part down for at least 2-3 months, then I would advice coming off the pill. At this point, you can speak with you doctor about coming off and make the decision to stop taking it.

From here, diet and supplementation is key, but from this point forward, every woman will experience something different. If you had normal cycles before going on the pill, there’s a good chance your period will return with ease and you’ll be fairly regular.

If you went on the pill when you were fairly young, roughly 14 or 15 years old, then your cycle may not return so easily. The reason being that if you go on the pill when you are very young, you actually haven’t given your body enough time to fully mature or your ovaries to develop. Then, if you’ve been on the pill for 10+ years and decide to come off, your ovaries and hormones are going to need a lot of time before getting regular and working ‘on their own’ again.

The truth is, it varies for every woman and each woman’s experience will be different.

ONCE OFF THE PILL:

At the end of the day, once you are off the pill, the ultimate goal is to get your body ovulating again. Ovulation is how you produce your estrogen and progesterone. Don’t just assume it’s about having babies. Ovulation has everything to do with being hormonally balanced and fertile, regardless of wanting to have babies or not.

*A few important things to note – when you come off the pill, many symptoms can arise, such as acne, heavy periods, no periods, migraines, irregular periods, spotting and hair loss.

This is due to your body no longer being supplied with synthetic hormones. You might think to go back on the pill or stay on it forever to avoid these symptoms, but trust me, give your body time and the right support and it will return to normal. You can minimize or avoid these symptoms all together.
ONCE OFF THE PILL (A FEW SCENERIOS):

YOUR PERIODS RETURN WITH EASE:

Great! Continue to supplement with the suggestions above, eat healthy and considering taking some turmeric to support liver detoxification. If you are wanting to get pregnant, I would suggest supporting your hormones and detoxification for at least 6 months before trying to conceive. Remember, your body is working to detoxify and ‘get rid of’ synthetic hormones. You do not want to pass this onto your baby.

YOU HAVE NO PERIOD OR IRREGULAR PERIODS:

If you come off the pill and 6-8 months down the road your period hasn’t returned, you can try supplementing with vitex (also known as chaste berry). This herb helps to increase progesterone production, which in turn can help with ovulation. Vitex should be taken on an empty stomach, first thing in the morning. You will know within 3-4 months if this herb is working for you. Do not supplement with it longer than 6 months. At this point, I would also suggest asking your doctor for some hormone blood tests, such as FSH, LH, androgens, prolactin and progesterone. If you do not have a period, I suggest taking vitex for 25 days on and 5 days off.

*DO NOT use vitex if you are under 18 years old.
*Vitex is not something I recommend for PCOS. I would work with a health practitioner/doctor to determine whether or not you have PCOS and then create a supplement protocol from there with your practitioner.

Here are the recommended doses for certain uses:

• For PMS: 400 milligrams daily before breakfast (empty stomach in the morning)
• For uterine fibroids: 400 milligrams twice daily
• For infertility: 160–240 milligrams daily
• For acne: 160 milligrams daily
• For endometriosis: 400 milligrams twice daily
• For menopause: 160–240 milligrams daily

If your periods were irregular before going on the pill, there’s a good chance they will be irregular after the pill. What’s important is to understand why they were irregular in the first place.

Typically, this is due to insulin resistance or even PCOS. The pill can actually increase your chances for developing PCOS as it effects how your body utilizes insulin. I do not recommend the pill as a solution for PCOS. As much as supplements and a healthy diet can be beneficial, if you are not addressing insulin resistance, your chances of getting your period back and regular again will be low.
ONCE OFF THE PILL (A FEW SCENERIOS):

POST PILL ACNE:

This is very common. In fact, I went through it myself for a few months and it sucked. The reason acne develops is because you’ve taken the synthetic estrogen away, which gives you clear, glowing skin. Your own estrogen will do the same thing for you, you just need to support your body with the right diet and supplements, zinc being one of them, to help clear up the acne. Trust me, it will go away, you just need to be patient. Eliminating sugar and supporting your liver are crucial for clear skin. Also, you can try supplementing with I3C or DIM, which helps to support estrogen detoxification.

HEAVY BLEEDING AFTER THE PILL:

If you suffered with heavy bleeding during your teens and are now in your late 30’s or 40’s, there’s a good chance you’ve outgrown this, however, that is not always the case.

Heavy bleeding is typically due to estrogen dominance or inflammation, or both. First, I would check with your doctor to rule out any fibroids or endometriosis (both of which are caused by estrogen dominance). If you have endometriosis I would advise speaking with your doctor about your options for coming off the pill. It is absolutely do-able, it just may be a little more complicated. Speak with an ND to discuss your options and get the right support.

I’ll say it again, the right supplements and meal plan in this case are essential. Turmeric, DIM and magnesium are also important in this case to support estrogen detoxification and support the liver in general. Iron is especially important for heavy bleeding and blood loss. It might also be wise to eliminate dairy, sugar and gluten as they tend to be inflammatory and can make heavy bleeding/estrogen dominance worse.

At the end of the day, I don’t recommend the pill or hormonal contraceptives as they can seriously wreak havoc on our delicate hormones and cycle. I see it all too often in my practice from women who are struggling to get pregnant, have PCOS, irregular periods, weight gain and are just so seriously fed up. I don’t blame them. And I can completely understand being that I’ve been in those same shoes.

The best contraceptive options would be the Fertility Awareness Method (when used correctly it is MORE effective than the pill!!), the copper IUD (not for everyone, but something to research) or barrier methods such as condoms or a cervical cap.
COMING OFF THE PILL MEANS YOU’LL FINALLY HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN HOW YOUR BODY ACTUALLY WORKS.

When you’re not on the pill and you start ovulating again your body will (ideally) resume a cyclical pattern of menstruation, followed by dry days, then mucus days, followed by ovulation, then dry days and menstruation again. If you pay attention to the fertile signs you’ll notice cyclical changes in your cervical mucus, basal body temperature, and cervical position.

You may observe cyclical changes in your breasts as they change and become more full and tender after ovulation. You may even notice cyclical changes in your moods, cravings, libido, creativity and the list goes on. For many women, myself included, it wasn’t until I went off the pill that I really had the opportunity to learn how my body works and observe the cyclical changes that occur throughout each menstrual cycle.

Be patient with yourself, feed yourself nutritious food, take the right supplements and be consistent. All in the right time your body WILL come back into balance with the right love and care

- Samantha xoxo