

Prescribing guidelines for Combined Oral Contraceptive Pills (COCP)

For a first time user - check there are no contra-indications by referring to:

- UK Medical Eligibility Criteria (UKMEC) Faculty of Sexual Reproductive Health 2009
www.fsrh.org/pages/Clinical_Guidance_1.asp
- Faculty of Sexual Reproductive Health Clinical Guidance Combined Hormonal Contraception 2011)
www.fsrh.org/pdfs/CEUGuidanceCombinedHormonalContraception.pdf

There are few direct comparative data to identify the best 1st line COCP. A monophasic pill containing 30mcg Ethinylestradiol (EE) with Levonorgestrel (Levest, Rigevidon) or combined with Norethisterone (Loestrin 30) is a suitable 1st choice for the majority of users who request oral contraception.

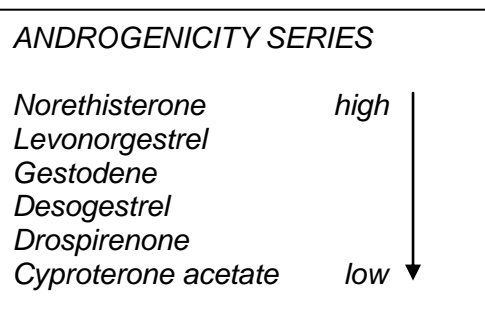
Women who need contraception and also have mild to moderate androgenic problems such as acne or hirsutism will benefit from a more oestrogenic pill than one containing Norethisterone and could initially be prescribed a 30mcg EE pill containing Desogestrel or Gestodene and advised to try it for a minimum of 3 months. Women with more severe androgenic skin problems who need contraception could be offered Yasmin as a 1st line preparation.

All COCPs (except Yasmin) contain progestogens which are derived from 19-nortestosterone and have varying degrees of androgenicity. According to the progestogen they contain, they will be classified as 'oestrogen' or 'progestogen' dominant.

Yasmin is a combined pill containing 30mcg ethinylestradiol and 3mg of Drospirenone. Drospirenone is a new progestogen derived from Spironolactone and therefore has specific anti-mineralocorticoid and anti-androgenic properties. Ethinylestradiol can cause water retention which may lead to a complaint of bloating when women take a COCP. Drospirenone can counteract this by having a natriuretic effect so may be particularly suitable for those women who suffer bloating, weight gain and breast tenderness on other COCPs.

In addition, the anti-androgenic properties of drospirenone have a beneficial effect on mild to moderate acne and Yasmin has been shown to be as effective as Dianette in this respect. It is now the preferred choice of Dermatologists for women with Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS).

	Cyproterone	Drospirenone	Gestodene (GSD)	Desogestrel (DSG)	Norgestimate	Levonorgestrel (LNG)	Norethisterone (NET)
35 mcg EE	Clairette / Dianette				Cilest		Norimin/Brevinor/Ovysmen
30 mcg EE		Yasmin	Millinette30	Gedarel 30		Levest/Rigevidon	Loestrin 30
20 mcg EE			Millinette 20	Gedarel 20			Loestrin 20
Progestogen-only pill (POP)				Cerelle/Zelleta		Norgeston	Micronor/Noriday



SIDE EFFECTS:

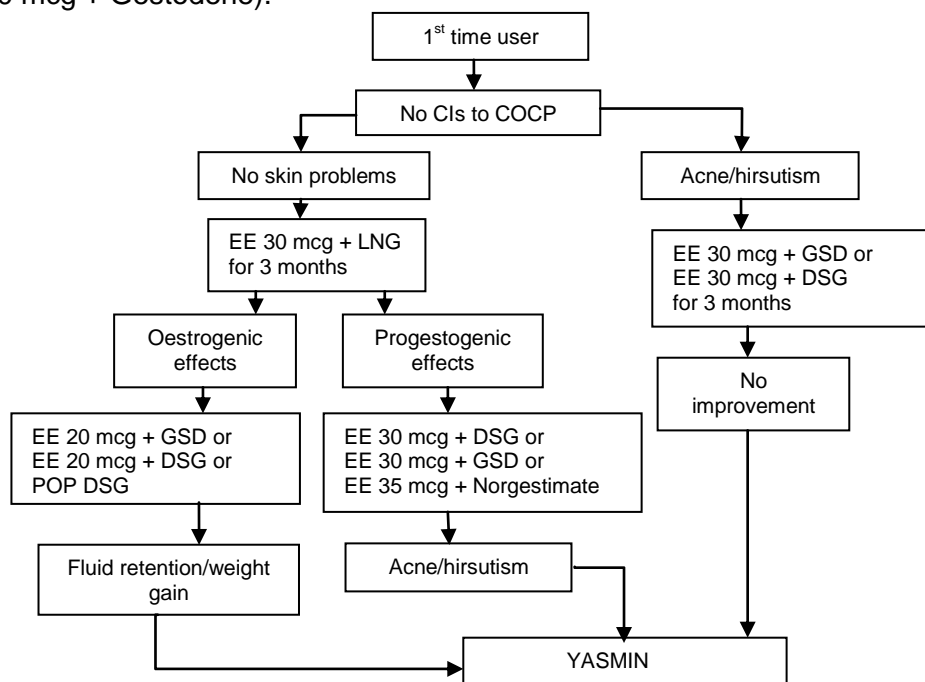
Oestrogenic	Progestogenic
Bloating	Acne
Breast enlargement/tenderness	Depression
Chloasma	Greasy hair
Nausea	Hirsutism
Non Infective vaginal discharge	Loss of libido
Photosensitivity	Vaginal dryness
Some headaches	Weight gain (increased appetite)
Weight gain(water retention)	

Breakthrough Bleeding on COC – ‘the Nine Ds’

For women who are experiencing breakthrough bleeding check for the following “Nine Ds”. In general, continue with the same pill for at least 3 months as bleeding may settle in this time. If after 3 months bleeding continues, switch to a higher oestrogen dose pill or change to a pill containing a different progestogen; try the vaginal ring - Nuvaring or change to a different method of contraception.

1. **Default** – have any pills been missed?
2. **Diarrhoea** and/or vomiting
3. **Disturbance** of absorption
4. **Drugs**
5. **Diet**
6. **Disease** (including Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID))
7. **Disturbance** of pregnancy – consider carrying out a pregnancy test
8. **Distress**
9. **Dose** – taking for 3 months

2nd choice of COCP: it is recommended that women are encouraged to try a COC for a minimum of 3 months before switching pills. After that period of time, women who have side effects relating to progestogens should be offered an oestrogen dominant COCP (EE 30mcg +Desogestrel, EE 30 mcg + Gestodene, EE 35 mcg + Norgestimate, Yasmin). Women with side effects relating to oestrogens should be offered a progestogen dominant COCP or a pill containing a lower dose of oestrogen (EE 20 mcg + Desogestrel, EE 20 mcg + Gestodene).



Dianette and Clairette 35mcg are an ethinylestradiol OCP containing cyproterone acetate, an anti-androgenic progestogen. It is licensed for the treatment of acne and hirsutism but not as an oral contraceptive. It can be used for women with moderate or severe acne/hirsutism or those who do not respond adequately to Yasmin.