Dear Alice,

I took two birth control pills in one day 'cause I forgot that I had already taken one that day. Do I still take one tonight even though I'll be ahead one day?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Accidentally popping a second pill is a common slip and fortunately one that’s unlikely to have long-term consequences. The extra pill may cause you to feel nauseous that day, but the feeling usually passes. However, if it continues for a couple of days, it might be good to talk with your health care provider. The day after the extra dose, continue to take your pills on schedule; you just won’t be lined up with the day on the pill pack. For example, if you took Wednesday and Thursday’s pills on Wednesday, continue taking the next pill (in this case, Friday’s pill) on Thursday. You’ll continue this until the end of the pack, at which point you’ll continue with the next pack. To avoid this situation in the future, you might try some strategies to help you remember to take it or explore other contraceptive options that better suit your life.

Even though you’ll be ahead one day, it’s key to continue taking the pill at the same time each day because some types of pills are only effective if taken every 24 hours. If you’re worried about pregnancy prevention, you might consider using a backup method of protection, such as a condom [2], for at least a week after the slip.

While birth control pills are a great form of contraceptive for some, others find it challenging to remember to take it consistently each day. Do you find that you’re regularly forgetting to take pills or taking an extra one? If so, how about pairing the pill with a daily activity? You could keep your pills next to the toothpaste and finish off your morning or nighttime routine with a dose. If you find that one activity isn’t consistent enough to associate with taking the pills, then try switching to another activity.

If you find sticking to the rigid daily schedule of birth control pills difficult to maintain, you may consider other contraceptive options. Intrauterine devices (IUDs) [3] or implants [4] may be a good option because they don’t require you to take a daily dose or much in the way of regular
maintenance for as long as they are effective (between three and ten years depending on the type). Additionally, the vaginal ring [5] (changed monthly) or contraceptive patch [6] (changed weekly) may also be options as they aren't replaced as frequently. Having a sense of your lifestyle and habits will help you make the contraceptive choice that’s right for you. Speaking with your health care provider about what options are best for you can help ensure that you're covered at all times!

Alice!
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