

Birth Control for Acne Simplified

Birth control pills, IUDs, implants and shots are widely used today and prescribed often as a means to control acne. Most forms of birth control can have the potential to cause acne and weight gain in those susceptible. Typically birth control is divided up as estrogen or progestin dominant and have varying degrees of androgenic (testosterone like) effects. As a general rule of thumb, those with the potential for higher androgenic symptoms should be avoided for people prone to acne because they promote breakouts. As an acne sufferer it is important to speak with your doctor about selecting a form of birth control that is **higher in estrogen and lower in androgen potency**.

The most commonly prescribed in this category are:

Brevicon	Necon	Tri-Nessa
Demulan	Ortho Tricyclen	Tri-Previferm
Femcon	Ortho-Novum	Tri-Sprintec
Kelnor	Ovcon	Zovia
Modicon	Previferm	
MonoNessa	Sprintec	

It is best to avoid the following that are high in androgen activity and low in estrogen, which are some of the following:

Alesse	Kariva	Nexplanon
Amethyst	Lessina	Nordette
Apri	Levora/Levonest	Norplant
Azurette	Linessa	NuvaRing
Caziant	Loestrin	Ogestrel
Cryselle	Lo-Feminol	Ortho Tricyclen Lo
Cyclessa	Lo-Ogestrel	Ovral
Depo-Provera	Lo-Ovral	Paragard/Copper IUD*
Desogen	Lutera	Portia
Emoquette	Marvelon	Reclipsen
Estrostep Fe	Microgestin	Seasonale/Seasonique
Implanon	Mircette	Sronyx
Jolessa	Mirena or Skyla IUD	Triphasil/Trivora

Bottom Line on Birth Control Pills and Acne

Choose a birth control pill that contains BOTH:

1. A higher dose of Ethinyl Estradiol (at least 35 mcg)
2. A progestin with a low androgenic effect

How do I check to see if a pill is safe?

Go to rxlist.com or google.com and search for the name of the pill. Find the drug information.

Example: Lutera

Each active, white tablet (21) contains 0.1 mg of levonorgestrel, d(-)-13β-ethyl-17α-ethinyl-17β-hydroxygon-4-en-3-one, a totally synthetic progestogen, and 0.02 mg of ethinyl estradiol, 17α-ethinyl-1,3,5(10)-estratriene-3, 17β-diol

THIS PILL IS NOT OK – 0.02 mg is 20 mcg

Example: Ortho Tri-Cyclen Lo

Each active, white tablet (21) contains 0.180 mg of norgestimate (+)-13-Ethyl-17-hydroxy-18, 19-dinor-17α-pregn-4-en-20-yn-3-one oxime acetate (ester) and 0.025 mg of the estrogenic compound, ethinyl estradiol (19-nor-17α-pregna,1,3,5(10)-trien-20-yne-3,17-diol)

THIS PILL IS NOT OK – 0.025 mg is 25 mcg

Example: Ortho Tri-Cyclen

Each gray tablet contains 0.180 mg of norgestimate (18, 19-Dinor-17-pregn-4-en-20-yn-3-one,17-(acetyloxy)-13-ethyl-oxime, (17α)-(+) -) and 0.035 mg of the estrogenic compound, ethinyl estradiol

THIS PILL IS OK – 0.035 mg is 35 mcg

Quick Reference Chart

Progestin	Not OK	OK
Norethindrone		X (if paired with at least 35 mcg of EE)
Norethindrone Acetate		X (if paired with at least 35 mcg of EE)
Ethinodiol Diacetate		X (if paired with at least 35 mcg of EE)
Levonorgestrel	X	Doesn't matter
Norgestrel	X	Doesn't matter
Desogestrel		X (if paired with at least 35 mcg of EE)
Norgestimate		X (if paired with at least 35 mcg of EE)
Drospirenone		X (even if paired with < 35 mcg of EE)