

# FEMALE ATHLETE HEALTH

## Hormonal contraceptives: What are the options?

**What are hormonal contraceptives (HC)?** Medications containing synthetic hormones (estrogen and progesterone, or progesterone only) that prevent pregnancy.

**Why do people use HC?** Pregnancy prevention, reduce menstrual symptoms, treat menstrual conditions (e.g., PCOS, endometriosis) or for menstrual cycle control.

**How do they work?** They block the release of eggs from the ovaries & thicken the cervical mucus to prevent sperm reaching the egg.



### IMPLANT

Contains progesterone only. Small plastic rod inserted, by a doctor, under the skin of the upper arm. Lasts 3 years. (e.g., Implanon™)



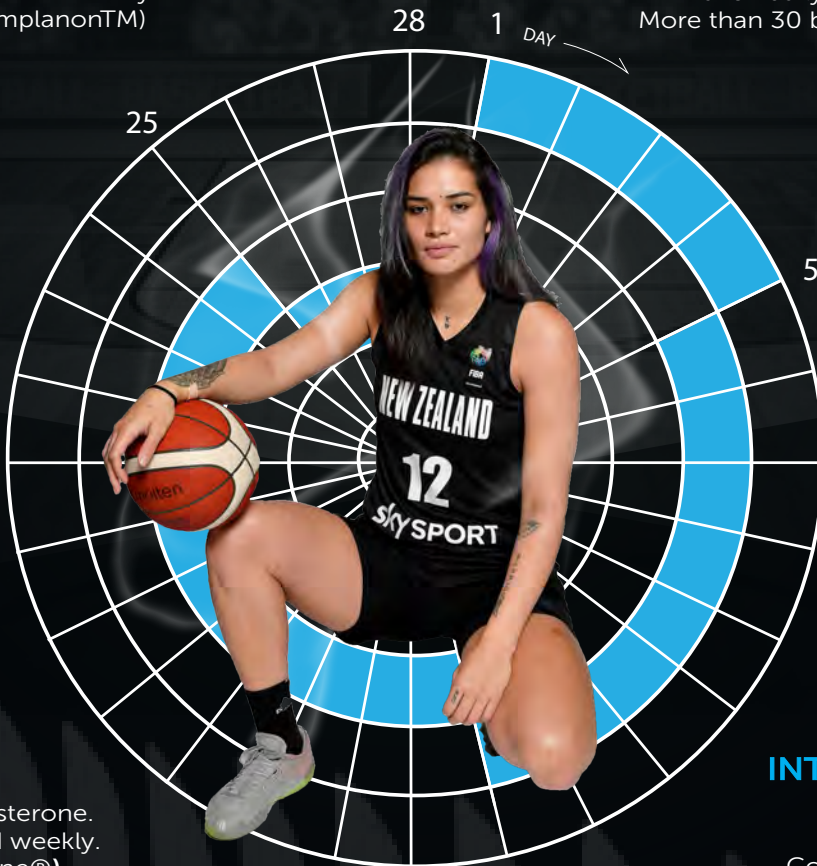
### ORAL CONTRACEPTIVE (OC) PILLS

Combined OC pills contain estrogen & progesterone, the mini pill contains progesterone only. Taken daily by mouth. More than 30 brands available!



### VAGINAL RING

Contains estrogen & progesterone. Self-inserted into the vagina. Lasts 3 weeks (e.g., NuvaRing™)



### INJECTION

Contains progesterone only. Intramuscular injection performed by a doctor. Lasts 3 months. (e.g., Depo-Provera™)



### PATCH\*

Contains estrogen & progesterone. Placed on the skin, changed weekly. Lasts 3 weeks. (e.g., Xulane®)  
\*not yet readily available in NZ



### INTRAUTERINE DEVICE (IUD)

Contains progesterone only. Inserted by a doctor in the uterus. Lasts 5 years. (e.g., Mirena™)

Synthetic hormones in hormonal contraceptives suppress natural production of estrogen & progesterone. The bleed experienced when taking sugar pills is not a real period; it's a withdrawal bleed from briefly stopping the synthetic hormones.

A regular menstrual cycle is a good indicator that your body is in balance. When you take hormonal contraceptives it 'masks' your cycle, so make sure you are eating enough to fuel your training.

If you choose to take hormonal contraception, talk to your doctor about which option would be best for you!



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