MISSED COMBINED ORAL CONTRACEPTIVE PILLS (COCs): CEU ADVICE FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

If one pill has been missed (more than 24 hours and up to 48 hours late)

Continuing contraceptive cover

• The missed pill should be taken as soon as it is remembered.

• The remaining pills should be continued at the usual time.

Minimising the risk of pregnancy

Emergency contraception (EC) is not usually required but may need to be considered if pills have been missed earlier in the packet or in the last week of the previous packet. If two or more pills have been missed (more than 48 hours late)

Continuing contraceptive cover

• The most recent missed pill should be taken as soon as possible.

• The remaining pills should be continued at the usual time.

• Condoms should be used or sex avoided until seven consecutive active pills have been taken. This advice may be overcautious in the second and third weeks, but the advice is a backup in the event that further pills are missed.

If pills are missed in the first week (Pills 1–7)If pills are missed in the second week (Pills 8–14)If pills are missed in the third week (Pills 15–21)EC should be considered if unprotected sex occurred in the pill-free interval or in the first week of pill-taking.No indication for EC if the pills in the preceding 7 days have been taken consistently and correctly (assuming the pills thereafter are taken correctly and additional contraceptive precautions are used).OMIT THE PILL-FREE INTERVAL by finishing the pills in the current pack (or discarding any placebo tablets) and starting a new pack the next day.	Minimising the risk of pregnancy			
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References

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- 3 Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Combined Oral Contraceptives (The Pill): When to Start Taking the Pill, and Missed Pill Advice. MHRA UK Public Assessment Report, May 2011. http://www.mhra.gov.uk [Accessed 12 May 2011].