

SIDE EFFECT MANAGEMENT

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- Side effects usually **diminish within 3 months** with continued use of same method¹⁷
- **Reassure & educate patients** to help establish realistic expectations & decrease the chance of unanticipated side effects¹⁷
- **Identify which component** is likely to be at fault, but it can be difficult to ascertain which portion (either the **oestrogen** or **progestogen** or **both**) is responsible

Oestrogen Related Side Effects

- The oestrogen used in COCs (usually ethinylestradiol) is linked to some minor side effects
- To resolve, lower the oestrogen dose
- Change to a more dominant progestogen
- Try progestogen only options that do not contain oestrogen
- **Most common side effects:** nausea, headache, thrush, excess bleeding, fluid retention, breast tenderness

Progestogen Related Side Effects

- Degree of androgenicity is likely to cause negative side effects
- A higher amount of oestrogen helps to reduce androgen related side effects
- Change type of progestogen to one with lower androgenic properties
- Increase the oestrogen strength
- **Most common side effects:** acne, vaginal dryness, sustained weight increase & low mood



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Adverse events & product complaints should be reported to the Health Products Regulatory Authority. Reporting forms & information can be found at www.hpra.ie.

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ACNE

- Generally mediated through progesterone
- More common side effect of 2nd generation pills – switch to a 4th generation pill
- If patient is on 4th generation pill & acne is persistent, increase oestrogen dose

ACNE

CAUSE

ACTION

WHICH CONTRACEPTIVE?

Too much progestagenic potency

Try less progestagenic 4th generation brands

Elvina • Elvinette • Qlaira
Yasmin • Yasminelle • Yaz
Zoely

Too much androgenic potency

Try less androgenic brands containing desogestrel

Marviol • Mercilon

Too little oestrogen

Increase oestrogen to a higher dose

Minulet • Ovarena • Ovranelle
• Logynon • Cilest • Cilique



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BREAK THROUGH BLEEDING

- Generally caused by irregular pill taking and lack of patient compliance
- Can result from a change in sexual partner – therefore it is important to rule out a STI
- May improve with an increase in oestrogen or a change in progestogen

CAUSE

ACTION

WHICH CONTRACEPTIVE?

Irregular pill taking

Counsel patient on correct usage

No change

Undiagnosed STI

Sexual history STI screen

No change

Too little oestrogen

Increase oestrogen to a higher dose

Minulet • Ovreea • Ovranelle
• Logynon • Cilest • Cilique

Too much progestagenic potency

Try less progestagenic 4th generation brands

Elvina • Qlaira • Yasmin • Zoely



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BLOATING / BREAST TENDERNESS

- Bloating is usually a progestogen side effect – change progestogen or increase oestrogen dose
- Breast tenderness is usually due to oestrogen – reduce oestrogen dose
- Consider copper coil as it's hormone free

CAUSE

ACTION

WHICH
CONTRACEPTIVE?

BLOATING

Too much progestagenic potency

Try less progestagenic 4th generation brands

Elvina • Elvinette • Qlaira
Yasmin • Yasminelle • Yaz • Zoely

BREAST TENDERNESS

Too much oestrogen

Reduce oestrogen to a lower dose

Elvinette • Leonore • Mercilon
Microlite • Violite • Yasminelle • Yaz

Try non oestrogen medicines

Azalia • Cerazette • Noriday

Consider non oral options

Copper coil • Implanon
Jaydess • Mirena • Nuvaring



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BLOATING /
BREAST
TENDERNESS

HEADACHES / HEADACHES DURING PILL FREE WEEK

- Ensure it is not migraine with aura
- Timing of the headache is the most important thing to establish
- If headache persists throughout the pill pack – likely cause is too much oestrogen
- If it's during pill free week – lower oestrogen dose or reduce pill free interval

CAUSE

ACTION

WHICH
CONTRACEPTIVE?

HEADACHES THROUGHOUT PILL PACK

Too much oestrogen	Reduce oestrogen to a lower dose	Elvinette • Leonore • Mercilon Microlite • Violite • Yasminelle • Yaz
	Try non oestrogen brands	Azalia • Cerazette • Noriday
	Consider non oral options	Copper coil • Implanon Jaydess • Mirena • Nuvaring

HEADACHES DURING PILL FREE WEEK

Too much of a hormone drop	Reduce oestrogen strength to a lower dose	Elvinette • Leonore • Mercilon Microlite • Violite • Yasminelle • Yaz
	Shorten or omit pill free interval	Logynon • Qlaira • Yaz • Zoely



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HEADACHES

IRRITABILITY / DEPRESSION / LOSS OF LIBIDO

- Progestogen is a mood suppressant – change progestogen
- Loss of libido – linked to androgen activity. If decrease in libido – try more androgenic pill
- Can happen with any combination of oestrogen/progestogen
- Consider copper coil as it is hormone free
- Depressed mood and depression are well known side effects of hormonal contraceptive care. If a patient develops depression while on the pill, consideration should be given to prescribing a non-hormonal alternative.

CAUSE

ACTION

WHICH CONTRACEPTIVE?

Too much progestagenic potency

Try less progestagenic 4th generation brands

Elvinette • Qlaira • Yasmin
Yasminelle • Yaz • Zoely

Too little androgenic properties

Try levonorgestrel brands with androgenic properties

Leonore • Microlite • Violite
Ovreea • Ovranelle • Logynon

Too little oestrogen

Increase oestrogen to a higher dose

Minulet • Ovreea • Ovranelle
Logynon • Cilest • Cilique



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IRRITABILITY /
DEPRESSION
/ LIBIDO LOSS

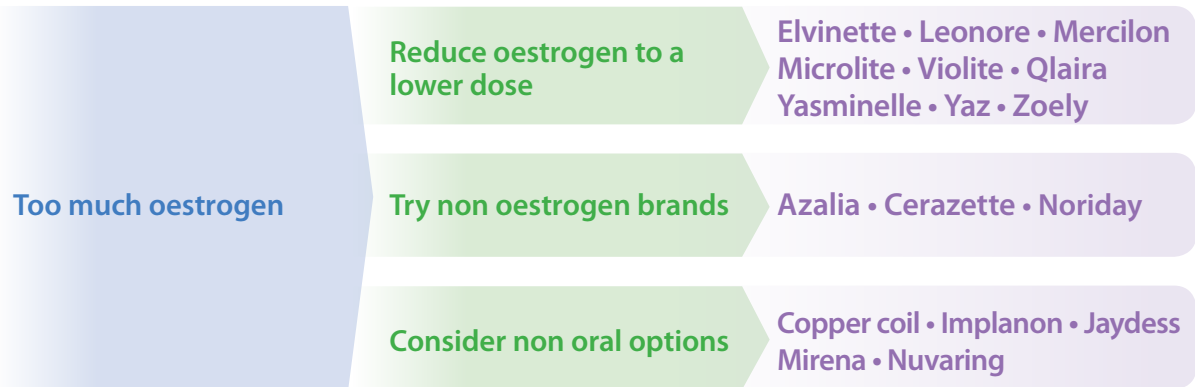
NAUSEA

- Can be caused by too much oestrogen – reduce oestrogen dose
- Can also be caused by both oestrogen and progestogen
- Advise patient to take pill in the evening time after food

CAUSE

ACTION

WHICH CONTRACEPTIVE?



NAUSEA



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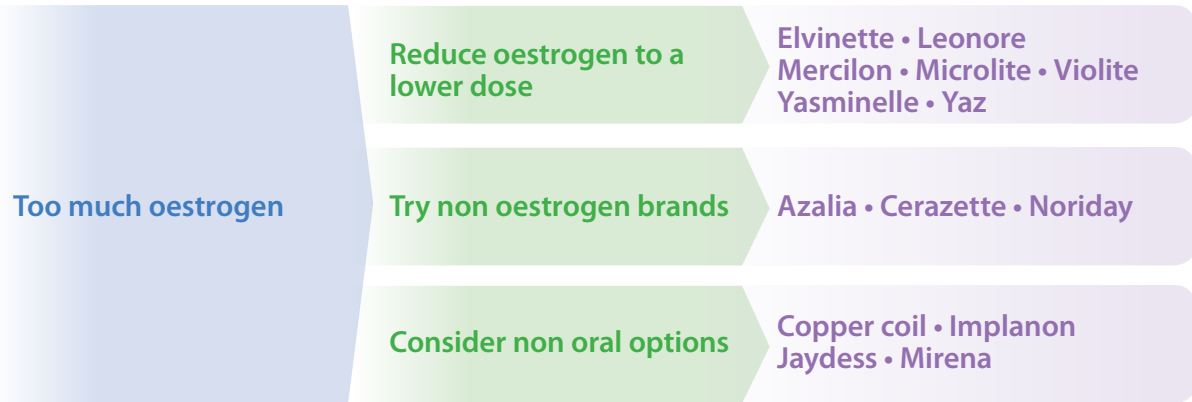
THRUSH

- Can be caused by too much oestrogen – reduce oestrogen dose
- Consider non oral options such as the copper intrauterine device

CAUSE

ACTION

WHICH CONTRACEPTIVE?



WEIGHT GAIN

- There is insufficient evidence to suggest CHCs can lead to weight gain
- Patients starting CHCs may find they have an increased appetite which can lead to weight gain
- Cyclical weight gain may be oestrogen related due to fluid retention – use low dose oestrogen pill

CAUSE

ACTION

WHICH CONTRACEPTIVE?

FLUID RETENTION

Too much oestrogen

Reduce oestrogen to a lower dose

Elvinette • Leonore • Mercilon • Microlite • Violite
Yasminelle • Yaz

Try non oestrogen brands

Azalia • Cerazette • Noriday



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