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From Reuters Health Information



## 24/4 Combined Oral Contraceptives Best for Pure Menstrual Migraine

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### Information from Industry

**NEW YORK (Reuters Health) Sep 27 -** Women with pure menstrual migraines without aura will get more relief with a combined oral contraceptive (COC) regimen that includes four placebo pills per cycle instead of the standard seven, new research shows.

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"A 24/4 regimen, with a shortened four-day pill-free interval, and with a progestin such as drospirenone, should be the regimen of choice for women suffering from menstrual migraines," said Dr. Vincenzo De Leo of the University of Siena, Italy and colleagues in an August 16th online paper in *Fertility and Sterility*.

A 2007 report in *Neurology* on the American Migraine Prevalence and Prevention study estimated that 17% of U.S. women suffer from migraines. According to Dr. De Leo and colleagues, 60% of women with migraines say the headaches are more likely to occur during menstruation. Women are said to have menstruation-related migraines if they have up to four migraines per month, one of which occurs during or directly before menstruation, on at least two out of three cycles.

According to 2004 data from the International Headache Society, a smaller percentage of female migraineurs (estimates range from about 4% to about 20%) have pure menstrual migraines. These occur on the first day of menstruation, or two days before or after, for at least two of every three cycles, and not at any other times.

Migraine sufferers who use combined oral contraceptives are more likely to have migraines on the days when they take placebo pills,

according to Dr. De Leo and colleagues. Research suggests pills containing the spironolactone-derived progestin drospirenone may improve premenstrual symptoms.

To learn more about their effects on menstrual migraines, the research team randomly assigned 60 women with pure menstrual migraine to take ethinyl E2/drospirenone for three months, either as 21 active pills followed by seven placebo pills, or 24 active pills and four placebo pills.

Women in both groups rated their headache intensity at around 2.75 on a scale of zero to three at the study's outset, while the average number of days per month with migraine was three for both groups.

Both groups reported having less intense migraines, and shorter migraine duration, but the reduction in the 24/4 group was significantly greater than in the 21/7 group, the researchers found.

At month three, the 21/7 group rated pain intensity at about 1.4, on average, while t

Also, women with seven days of placebo pills averaged about 1.4 days of migraine women receiving placebo pills on four da

None of the patients reported side effects, and compliance was "excele

They conclude: "The 24/4 COC regimen is recommended as the preferred treatment migraine without aura."

SOURCE: <http://bit.ly/oSRK10>

Fertil Steril 2011.

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