

Safeguarding access to combined oral contraceptives

From a clinical point of view, the WHO determined the amount of ferrous fumarate used as a placebo in combined oral contraceptives is at a **non-therapeutic dose and hence has no clinical relevance as an iron supplement.**

In line with this, UNFPA, in collaboration with other global procurers, has diversified options of prequalified combined oral contraceptives offered to countries. Of the **8 combined oral contraceptives** UNFPA supplies, only 1 contains the iron placebos, 4 contain non-iron placebos and 3 have no placebos for the 7-day hormone-free period.

The role of the placebo pill:

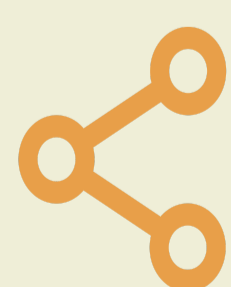
- To allow the user to continue the routine of taking a pill every day.
- Both the iron and non-iron placebos allow for a hormone-free period to simulate the average menstrual cycle.
- Iron placebos are insufficient for recommended iron supplementation.



Why advocate for the switch?

Diversified product selections in national supply plans to include options for WHO prequalified combined oral contraceptives will **safeguard access for women and girls** to the contraceptive method against any potential supply chain disruptions.

Registration (or issuance of waivers) of WHO prequalified products will allow for **smooth importation** once considered for fulfilment of national supply plans.



Share this information about the prequalified combined oral contraceptives UNFPA supplies with partners, health care workers and contraceptive users.