Long cycle with Combined Hormonal Contraception
Self-determined management of menstruation for women

A significant majority of women (56%) would like to have less frequent or no monthly bleeding. Only 28% of women prefer to have monthly periods.¹ This result from the Austrian Contraceptive Prevalence Report is consistent with other studies from Germany.²,³ Accordingly, 38% of women have already used hormonal contraception for longer periods without a break to avoid a period. Around 4% of women manage their menstruation regularly and 14% occasionally. This practice is especially widely used by young women (21-29 years) – around 50%.

Women have significantly fewer headaches, less abdominal pain, and improved well-being during the long cycle compared with women using the conventional regimen.⁴ From a medical point of view, the long cycle is safe and normal fertility resumes quickly once hormonal contraception is stopped.⁵

The monthly withdrawal bleeding in women using the pill, vaginal ring, or patch is artificially induced by the 4-7 day hormone-free interval. This is not based on biological necessity but was introduced by the inventors of the pill in the 1960s as a marketing tool. The (artificial) monthly bleeding was intended to mimic the natural cycle in order to increase acceptance among women, as well as to facilitate approval by the American health agency FDA. Gregory Pincus, the inventor of the pill, describes this in his biography.⁶

This aspect has become a growing topic of discussion.⁷,⁸ A 3-month pill has been on the market in the US since 2003 (Seasonale®,) and recently, a similar product was marketed in several European countries (Seasonique®).⁹ Consequently, an increasing number of women are freely deciding, based on their own needs and desires, the frequency and timing of their period by using the pill, ring, or patch in a long cycle.

More information can be found in several languages at: www.periodfree.info

² Study on contraceptive prevalence, Germany (Verhüttungsverhalten Erwachsener), BZgA 2011, www.bzga.de