This publication represents the views and expert opinions of an IARC Working Group on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans, which met in Lyon, 7–14 June 2005.
In 1969, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) initiated a programme on the evaluation of the carcinogenic risk of chemicals to humans involving the production of critically evaluated monographs on individual chemicals. The programme was subsequently expanded to include evaluations of carcinogenic risks associated with exposures to complex mixtures, life-style factors and biological and physical agents, as well as those in specific occupations.

The objective of the programme is to elaborate and publish in the form of monographs critical reviews of data on carcinogenicity for agents to which humans are known to be exposed and on specific exposure situations; to evaluate these data in terms of human risk with the help of international working groups of experts in chemical carcinogenesis and related fields; and to indicate where additional research efforts are needed.

The lists of IARC evaluations are regularly updated and are available on Internet: http://monographs.iarc.fr/

This programme has been supported by Cooperative Agreement 5 U01 CA33193 awarded since 1982 by the United States National Cancer Institute, Department of Health and Human Services. Additional support has been provided since 1986 by the European Commission, Directorate-General EMPL (Employment, and Social Affairs), Health, Safety and Hygiene at Work Unit, and since 1992 by the United States National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

Published by the International Agency for Research on Cancer,
150 cours Albert Thomas, 69372 Lyon Cedex 08, France
©International Agency for Research on Cancer, 2007

Distributed by WHO Press, World Health Organization, 20 Avenue Appia, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland
tel.: +41 22 791 3264; fax: +41 22 791 4857; e-mail: bookorders@who.int).

Publications of the World Health Organization enjoy copyright protection in accordance with the provisions of Protocol 2 of the Universal Copyright Convention. All rights reserved.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer welcomes requests for permission to reproduce or translate its publications, in part or in full. Requests for permission to reproduce or translate IARC publications – whether for sale or for noncommercial distribution – should be addressed to WHO Press, at the above address (fax: +41 22 791 4806; email: permissions@who.int).

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the World Health Organization concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city, or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The mention of specific companies or of certain manufacturers’ products does not imply that they are endorsed or recommended by the World Health Organization in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

Errors and omissions excepted, the names of proprietary products are distinguished by initial capital letters.

The IARC Monographs Working Group alone is responsible for the views expressed in this publication.

IARC Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Combined Estrogen–Progestogen Contraceptives and
Combined Estrogen–Progestogen Menopausal Therapy/
(IARC monographs on the evaluation of carcinogenic risks to humans ; v. 91)
1. Contraceptives, Oral, Hormononal – adverse effects 2. Estrogens – adverse effects
7. Progestins – adverse effects 8. Progestins – therapeutic use
I. IARC Working Group on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans II. Series

ISBN 978 92 832 1291 1 (NLM Classification: W1)
ISSN 1017-1606

PRINTED IN FRANCE
Oral contraceptives for family planning worldwide have revolutionized the reproductive lives of millions of women since their introduction in the 1960s.

Later on, a variety of side-effects including cardiovascular diseases was recognized. In response to these concerns, new generations of combined oral contraceptives were developed that featured lower doses of estrogen and newer, more potent progestogens.

The effectiveness and ease of use of combined hormonal contraceptives suggest that they will continue to be used to a significant extent in the future.