



EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

More than half of all pregnancies in the United States are unplanned—accidents. We forget to take our pills. Condoms break. We have sex when we didn't expect to—or want to. If you have sex without using birth control and you don't want to be pregnant, you may want to use emergency contraception.

What is Emergency Contraception?

Emergency contraception is any method that prevents pregnancy after you have sex. Women have tried lots of methods of emergency contraception over the years. We are lucky to have a few methods that work well and have been tested scientifically.

What Are the Best Methods of Emergency Contraception?

There are two methods of emergency contraception available in the United States. The most common is the emergency contraception pill (ECP). ECPs contain hormones like the hormones in birth control pills. The other method of emergency contraception is having an intrauterine device (IUD) put in, which is very effective (99%) in stopping pregnancy. An IUD may cost a lot of money depending on your insurance coverage, and the IUD has to be put in by a health care provider. This handout will tell you about ECPs.

How Does Emergency Contraception Work?

We don't know exactly how emergency contraception works. Most likely, it stops you from having an egg available. It may make it harder for sperm to reach the egg. If the egg and the sperm do get together, emergency contraception may make it hard for the fertilized egg to stay in the uterus. Emergency contraception won't stop a pregnancy that is already growing in the uterus.

I Don't Have Sex Very Often. Can I Use Emergency Contraception Instead of Regular Birth Control?

Emergency contraception is not as effective as regular birth control methods. If used at the perfect time, emergency contraception is 75% to 99% effective. Regular birth control—like birth control pills or Depo-Provera (the shot)—is up to 99% effective.

Is Emergency Contraception Safe?

Yes, emergency contraception is very safe. Even women who cannot take birth control pills can safely use emergency contraception.

Are There Any Side Effects of Emergency Contraception?

The most common side effect of emergency contraception is nausea that lasts a day or so and, rarely, vomiting. Your health care provider can give you a prescription for medicine to prevent nausea. If you don't have a prescription, you can sip ginger tea to control nausea if it occurs.

How Do I Get Emergency Contraception if I am 18 years old or older?

You can get emergency contraception called Plan B at a pharmacy without a prescription if you are 18 years or older. You may need to show proof of your age. Plan B is kept behind the pharmacist's counter so you can ask for it and talk to the pharmacist if you want additional information before using it.

How Do I Get Emergency Contraception if I am under age 18?

Ask your health care provider for a prescription to have on hand in case you need it. If you are afraid to ask your health care provider, call the local Planned Parenthood (1-800-PLAN). You can use some kinds of regular birth control pills as emergency contraception. The flip side of this sheet tells how to do this.

How Do I Take the Emergency Contraception Pills?

The easiest ECP to use is Plan B. Plan B is a small packet that contains two little pills. You take one, and then the second one 12 hours later. If it is easier, you can take both pills at one time instead of taking the second pill 12 hours later. Both methods work. You can also use regular birth control pills for emergency contraception and the chart below tells you how to use each brand of pill.

MAKING EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION WORK FOR YOU

How to Use Plan B for Emergency Contraception

Step #1: Take your first dose of Plan B as soon as you can after you have sex. It works better that way.

You can take the first dose up to 5 days after you have sex, but the sooner you take the pill, the more likely you are to prevent pregnancy.

Step #2: Take your second dose of Plan B 12 hours after the first dose.

Step #3: If your period doesn't come in 3 weeks, get a pregnancy test.

With Plan B, it is OK to take both pills at the same time, if you are worried that you might not be able to take two pills 12 hours apart.

How to Use Birth Control Pills for Emergency Contraception

If you are going to use birth control pills for emergency contraception *you have to take two doses*.

Step #1: The number of pills listed in the [table](#) below is one dose. It is important that you take the right color of pill.

Step #2: Take the same number of the same color pills 12 hours after the first dose.

Step #3: If your period doesn't come in 3 weeks, get a pregnancy test.

Name of Pill	Number of Pills for One Dose	Name of Pill	Number of Pills for One Dose
Alesse	5 pink pills	Lutera	5 white pills
Aviane	5 orange pills	Nordette	4 light orange pills
Cryselle	4 white pills	Ogestrel	2 white pills
Enpresse	4 orange pills	Ovral	2 white pills
Lessina	5 pink pills	Portia	4 pink pills
Levlen	4 light orange pills	Seasonale	4 pink pills
Levlite	5 pink pills	Tri-Levlen	4 yellow pills
Levora	4 white pills	Triphasil	4 yellow pills
Lo/Ovral	4 white pills	Trivora	4 pink pills
Lo-Ogestrel	4 white pills	Ovrette	20 (yes, 20) pills

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Planned Parenthood

1-800-230-PLAN (1-800-230-7526)

<http://www.plannedparenthood.org>

Emergency Contraception Web site

1-888-not2late (1-800-668-2-5283)

<http://www.NOT-2-LATE.com>

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