



The Bronx Health Link

Emergency Contraception

Emergency contraception (EC) is a safe and effective way of preventing pregnancy after unprotected intercourse (sex without using birth control).

EC contains hormones found in birth control pills and must be started within 5 days after unprotected sex.

EC should be in every woman's medicine cabinet. It is an important tool for women to prevent unintended pregnancy.

If more widely available, EC could prevent 1.7 million unintended pregnancies and 800,000 abortions each year in the U.S. alone.

You may want EC if :

- The condom broke or slipped off.
- You forgot to take your birth control pills, insert your ring, or apply your patch.
- Your diaphragm, cap, or shield slipped out of place.
- He forced you to have unprotected vaginal sex.
- You were not using any form of birth control.
- You got your "safe" days wrong.

Information compiled from:
Planned Parenthood
www.plannedparenthood.org/ec



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Special points of interest:

- ◆ How should you take EC?
- ◆ What are the side effects of taking EC?
- ◆ Answering your questions on EC
- ◆ Who and where to call for more information on EC

Emergency Contraception: The Basics

Emergency contraception (EC) can prevent pregnancy after unprotected vaginal intercourse. It is also called "morning-after" contraception, emergency birth control, or backup birth control.

EC must be started up to 120 hours — five days — after unprotected intercourse to reduce the risk of pregnancy. **The sooner it is started, the better.** EC reduces the risk of pregnancy by 75-89 percent when started within 72 hours.

EC contains hormones found in birth control pills and prevents pregnancy by stopping ovulation or fertilization.

Plan B® is a brand of hormone pills approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) specifically for emergency contraception. Certain birth control pills

may also be prescribed for use as emergency contraception. Some forms of EC use "combination pills" with estrogen and progestin — synthetic hormones like the ones a woman's body makes. Others, such as Plan B, are progestin-only.

EC will not cause an abortion or affect an existing pregnancy. A woman should not use emergency contraception if she is pregnant.

IUDs can also be used as backup birth control if inserted within 120 hours — five days — after unprotected intercourse.

Information compiled from:
Planned Parenthood,
www.plannedparenthood.org/ec

Emergency contraception will not cause an abortion or affect an existing pregnancy.

After Taking Emergency Contraception

After taking the pills:

- Your next period may be earlier or later than usual.
- Your flow may be heavier, lighter, more spotty, or the same as usual.
- Tell any health care provider you may see before you get your next period that you have taken EC.
- Schedule a follow-up visit with



- Be sure to use a method of contraception if you have

your doctor if you do not have your period in three weeks or if you have symptoms of pregnancy.

- Continue using the birth control method of your choice for as long as you want to avoid pregnancy.

Information compiled from:
Planned Parenthood,
www.plannedparenthood.org/ec

How To Take Emergency Contraception

Plan B and other progestin-only pills can be taken in one dose or in two doses, 12 hours apart. Combination hormone pills must be taken in two doses, 12 hours apart. The number of pills in a dose varies with the brand of the pill. Use the same brand for both doses.

Swallow the pills in the first dose as soon as possible, up to 120 hours — five days — after having unprotected sex. EC may cause nausea and vomiting. This risk is much higher for combination pills than for progestin-only pills. To reduce the risk of nausea, you may want to take an anti-nausea medication, such as Dramamine® or Bonine® one hour before taking EC.

If you are taking the pills in two doses, swallow the second dose 12 hours after taking the first dose. If you threw up after the first dose, be sure to use an anti-nausea medication one hour before taking the second dose. Or you may want to take the second dose as a vaginal suppository by inserting the pills with your fingers as high into the vagina as you can reach. (The medication will be absorbed through the vaginal tissue.)

If you vomit the second dose, do not take any extra pills. They probably won't reduce the risk of pregnancy. But they will probably make you sick to your stomach.

If you threw up after the first dose, be sure to use an anti-nausea medication one hour before taking the second dose.

Information compiled from:
Planned Parenthood,
www.plannedparenthood.org/ec

For more info about EC and how to get it:

National Women's Health Information Center
1 (800) 994-9662

NYC Department of Health
Has info on government clinics where you can get EC
Dial 311 or 1 (800) 698-0411

Planned Parenthood
Has info on clinics where you can get EC
1 (800) 230-PLAN
www.plannedparenthood.org/ec

Emergency Contraception Hotline
This 24-hour, confidential number can help you find a nearby doctor or clinic that provides EC.
1 (888) NOT-2-LATE

Using Birth Control Pills As EC

Are you still unable to find a clinic or doctor to help you? Don't forget that EC is just a high dose of regular birth control pills. If you have a package of birth control pills, or can get one, you may be able to use it as EC. **But be sure to check the information from <http://ec.princeton.edu/questions/dose.html>** to figure out how to do it correctly. Go to this web page and you'll find a list of different brands of birth control pills and the number of pills you'll need to take for each brand to be as effective as EC.

Information compiled from: www.advocatesforyouth.org

Effectiveness and Side Effects

Progestin-only EC reduces the risk of pregnancy by 89 percent if started within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse. For example, eight out of 100 women will become pregnant after having unprotected sex once during the second or third week of their cycles. But only one woman out of 100 will become pregnant after taking progestin-only EC.

Combination EC reduces the risk of pregnancy by 75 percent if started within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse. Only 2 out of 100 will become pregnant after taking combination EC.

Emergency contraception is meant as backup birth control only. EC is not as effective as the correct and consistent use of reversible contraception, like the IUD, the shot, the pill, the patch, or the ring.

EC does not continue to prevent pregnancy during the rest of the cycle. Other methods of birth control must be used.

Emergency contraception offers



no protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). You may want to consider getting tested for STIs if there is a possibility that unprotected sex put you at risk.

Frequent use of EC may cause periods to become irregular and unpredictable.

The side effects of anti-nausea medication may include drowsiness. Please follow the precautions on the package insert.

Side effects associated with the use of EC usually wear off within a day or two.

Half of the women who take the combination pills feel sick to their stomachs, but only for about 24 hours. Fewer than 1 out of 5 women vomit with combination pills.

The risk of nausea and vomiting is much lower with progestin-only EC - less than one in four women feel sick to their stomachs.

Breast tenderness, irregular bleeding, dizziness, and headaches may also occur.

There have been no reports of serious complications among the millions of women who have used EC.

Information compiled from *Planned Parenthood*, www.plannedparenthood.org/ec

EC: Frequently Asked Questions

How does emergency contraception work?

Emergency contraception can keep you from becoming pregnant by:

- Keeping the egg from leaving the ovary, OR
- Keeping the sperm from meeting the egg, OR

- Keeping the fertilized egg from attaching to the uterus (womb).

If you are already pregnant, emergency contraception will NOT work.

Continued on next page . . .

Frequently Asked Questions: EC

Are emergency contraceptive (EC) pills the same thing as the "morning after pill"?

Yes. EC is often called the "morning after pill" even though EC is really two or more pills and those pills don't have to be taken the morning after. You should always take EC as soon as you can after having unprotected sex (sex without using birth control), but it can work up to 5 days later.

How do I get emergency contraceptive pills?

Plan B (progestin-only) is sold over-the-counter to women who are 18 years or older. Women under 18 need a prescription. Women have to show proof of age to buy Plan B. You can also contact your local Planned Parenthood office (call 800-230-PLAN for listings) to get EC or, if you are under 18, to get a prescription. If you are on Medicaid and you are 18 or older, your Plan B costs will be covered up to six times a year. Also, the City Department of Health offers free EC at its Sexually Transmitted Disease clinics. To find these services, see the phone numbers on page 3.

Can I get emergency contraceptive pills before I need them?

Yes. Your doctor should bring up EC at your annual exam (when you have a pap smear or pap test). Ask for emergency contraception at your next appointment.

Will EC protect me from sexually transmitted infections?

No. EC can only keep you from becoming pregnant. Always use condoms to lower your risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection.

What do I need to do after I take EC?

Take EC exactly as your doctor or pharmacist tells you to. If you see another doctor or nurse for any reason after taking EC, tell him/her that you have taken EC.

Some women feel sick and throw up after taking EC. This happens more often with pills that contain both estrogen and progestin. Your doctor or pharmacist can give you medication to help control this. If you throw up after taking EC, call your doctor or pharmacist.

After you have taken EC, your next period may come sooner or later than normal. Your period also may be heavier, lighter, or more spotty than normal. Use another birth control method if you have sex any time before your next period starts.

If you do not get your period in 3 weeks or if you think you might be pregnant after taking EC, consider getting a test just to make sure you're not pregnant.

Does EC work all the time?

No. Emergency contraceptive pills

that contain both estrogen and progestin are about 75% effective at keeping a woman from getting pregnant. In other words, if 100 women had unprotected sex in the fertile part of their cycle (when an egg is most likely to leave the ovary), about 8 of those women would become pregnant. If all 100 women took combined EC, only 2 would become pregnant. EC containing only progestin is about 89% effective. If those same 100 women took progestin-only EC, only 1 would become pregnant.

The IUD is 99.9% effective. If 1,000 women had an IUD put in, only one would become pregnant. The sooner you take emergency contraception after sex, the better your chances it will work.

My friend took EC. It did not work. If she stays pregnant, will there be something wrong with her baby?

No. Studies have been done with women who did not know they were pregnant and kept taking birth control pills. These studies have found no greater risk for birth defects. Your friend should see a doctor right away to talk about her options.

Information compiled from:

National Women's Health Information Center, www.4woman.gov/faq/econtracept.htm

Planned Parenthood, www.plannedparenthood.org/ec

Monthly Newsletter

THE BRONX HEALTH LINK, INC.



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We're on the Web!
www.BronxHealthLink.org

Our Mission

The Bronx Health Link, Inc. (TBHL) is a Bronx-wide network of diverse service providers, organizations, coalitions, agencies, community stakeholders, residents, and students. We serve the Bronx and NYC in various ways, including as a clearinghouse for information and referral, providing technical assistance as needed, and broadcasting information through the TBHL Email Communication Network, which has over 500 subscribers. The daily E-Comm provides e-mail messages on a wide scope of information, including grant and job opportunities (Mon.), public health and medical access news (Tues.), community and provider events and resources (Wed.), medical research and safety alerts (Thurs.), and news on maternal, infant, child, adolescent, and women's reproductive health research, news, and resources (Fri.).

Our mission is to improve community health by:

- identifying emerging community health issues;
- increasing communication to better serve the community;
- providing information to providers and community residents on services and resources; and
- increasing access to available services and programs.

Emergency IUD Insertion

A doctor can insert an IUD for emergency contraception within five days of unprotected intercourse to prevent pregnancy. Emergency IUD insertion reduces the risk of pregnancy by 99.9 percent.

The Copper T 380A IUD (ParaGard®) is used for emergency contraception. It can be left in place for up to 12 years for very effective contraception. Or the IUD can be removed after your next menstrual period, when it is certain that you are not pregnant.

IUD insertion is NOT recommended for women at

risk for STDs at the time of insertion, including women who have been raped.

The side effects, advantages, and disadvantages of using IUDs for emergency contraception are the same as those associated with using IUDs for ongoing contraception.

It costs about \$400 for exam, IUD, and insertion. These costs may be covered by Medicaid — ask your doctor.

Information compiled from:
Planned Parenthood
www.plannedparenthood.org/ec

Resources on IUDs

For more info on IUDs:

Planned Parenthood of NYC
(212) 965-7000
www.ppnyc.org
Go to "Health Services" and then "Fact Sheets"

Feminist Women's Health Center
<http://www.birth-control-comparison.info/iudinfo.htm>

National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association
www.nfprha.org