

# Information about EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION (EC)

## ***What is emergency contraception (EC)?***

EC is a pill or pills that can prevent pregnancy after having unprotected sex.

EC pills can have a single hormone (progestin) or two hormones (estrogen and progestin).

## ***When can I use EC?***

EC is to be taken as soon as possible after having unprotected sex. This includes sex without birth control or when a birth control method does not work.

Examples are:

- You had sex when you did not plan to have sex
- You did not use any birth control
- The condom broke or slipped
- You missed taking some of your birth control pills
- You are overdue for your birth control shot
- Your diaphragm or cervical cap slipped
- You had sex against your will

## ***How does EC Work?***

These hormones prevent pregnancy in several different ways.

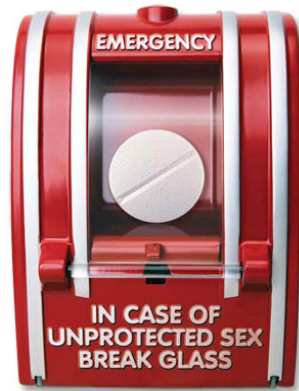
They may:

- Keep the body from releasing an egg that could be fertilized by a man's sperm
- Cause changes to the cervical mucus making it more difficult for a man's sperm to enter the uterus (womb)

## ***How well does EC work?***

If taken within 3 days (72 hours) after unprotected sex, this method is about 75% to 89% effective. If taken within 5 days, the method is less effective, but may be used.

EC works best if taken as soon as possible after having unprotected sex. EC does not work all of the time. You can still get pregnant using EC. The pills do not work if the fertilized egg is already attached to the uterus (womb) or tube.



**EC will not work if you are already pregnant, and will not be harmful to the pregnancy.**

## ***Is there anyone who should not use EC?***

Most women do not have problems when they take EC.

You should not take EC if:

- You are or think you are pregnant
- You have bleeding from the vagina and don't know why

It is important to talk with the doctor or nurse before taking EC if:

- You have ever had major problems taking birth control pills
- You have been told you should not take birth control pills

## ***Will I have any problems if I use EC?***

EC pills are the same pills that have been used for over 30 years by millions of women. For most women, EC is a safe way to lower the chances of getting pregnant after unprotected sex. EC is not 100% effective. You may still get pregnant using EC.

Some women feel sick to their stomach or vomit. Some women have sore breasts or headaches. EC may cause your period to come a little early or late.

## ***How do I take them?***

EC is started as soon as possible within 3 days (72 hours) or as long as 5 days (120 hours) after unprotected sex.

Take EC as directed by the doctor or nurse. The number of pills or doses may vary depending on the EC given.

If you vomit within 2 hours of any dose, call the clinic.

## ***Where can I get EC?***

EC is available over the counter (do not need a prescription) at most drug stores.

You may also get EC, or a prescription for EC, at your local health department, a family planning clinic, or doctor's office.

### **REMEMBER:**

***EC is meant for one-time emergency use and it does not work as well as other kinds of birth control. If you are having sex, use a regular method of birth control (the pill, the shot, condoms, etc.).***

***Discuss with the doctor or nurse how to restart your current method of birth control after using EC.***

***Call the clinic if you do not have a normal menstrual period within 3 weeks of using EC.***

***EC will not protect you against HIV or any other sexually transmitted diseases. Use condoms to protect yourself each time you have sex.***

***If you have any questions, call us at:***

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