



Key Facts about Emergency Contraceptive Pills for Women and their Partners

Emergency Contraception is a safe and effective way to prevent pregnancy after sex.

You can use emergency contraception if:

- you didn't use birth control, or
- your birth control method didn't work, or
- you were forced to have sex.

What are Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECPs)?

Emergency contraceptive pills prevent pregnancy by stopping an egg from leaving the ovary, stopping the sperm from reaching the egg, or stopping a fertilized egg from attaching in the uterus. There are two types of ECPs:

- Plan B™ (1 pill per dose)
- High doses of regular birth control pills (number of pills you take depends on which birth control pill you use)

Pills should be started within 120 hours (five days)* after unprotected sex – but the sooner the better.

ECPs work best when the first dose is taken within 72 hours (3 days). If you take ECPs within 3 days they are 75-89 percent effective at stopping a pregnancy from occurring. If you take ECPs between 3 and 5 days after unprotected sex, they are still more than 70 percent effective at preventing pregnancy. The sooner you start ECPs, the better they work to prevent pregnancy.

Emergency contraceptive pills require two doses:

- Take the first dose as soon as possible after unprotected intercourse. Take the second dose 12 hours later.
- You may be able to take both doses of Plan B at the same time. Ask your healthcare provider if this is possible.

Women can keep pills at home in case of emergency.

You can get a prescription for emergency contraception ahead of time to keep at home in case you need it. Ask your health care provider.

Won't cause an abortion.

- Emergency contraceptive pills are **NOT** the same as RU-486 (the abortion pill).
- Emergency contraceptive pills do not cause an abortion.

Won't harm an existing pregnancy.

- ECPs won't harm your pregnancy if you take them by mistake when you are already pregnant
- Using emergency contraceptive pills will not affect your ability to get pregnant in the future.

Side effects are mild.

- Half of women who use high doses of regular birth control pills for emergency contraception feel nauseous, but only for about one day. Nausea and vomiting are much less common with Plan B. You can take an over-the-counter medicine such as Dramamine, or ask your health care provider for suggestions or a prescription to help with nausea.
- Your next period may be earlier or later than usual. Flow may be heavier, lighter, or the same as usual.

Medical follow up after taking Emergency Contraceptive Pills.

- If you do not have a normal period within 3 weeks, take a home pregnancy test or visit a healthcare provider to test for pregnancy.
- Visit your provider if you want to start a regular birth control method or need services to prevent or test for sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.
- For regular, long-term use, other contraceptive methods are more effective.
- Emergency contraceptive pills do not protect against sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.

For more information on emergency contraception contact the Massachusetts EC Network at www.MassEcNetwork.org or the national hotline at 1.888.NOT-2-LATE