

What if you need birth control AFTER sex?

Use Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECP) if:

- ✱ *You didn't use any birth control method.*
- ✱ *You used the "pull-out" method.*
- ✱ *His condom broke or slipped off.*
- ✱ *You've forgotten to take your birth control pills more than two days in a row.*
- ✱ *You were two or more days late in starting a new vaginal ring or patch cycle.*
- ✱ *Your diaphragm, female condom or cervical cap slipped during sex.*
- ✱ *You were late in getting your Depo shot.*
- ✱ *You were forced to have unprotected sex.*

What are Emergency Contraceptive Pills?

Emergency Contraception is also commonly called the "morning-after" pill. It is used for pregnancy prevention after vaginal intercourse has occurred, and you have either not used a birth control method or your method has failed. In the U.S., the Emergency Contraception used most often is called Plan B. It consists of a sequence of two hormonal pills that you take as soon as possible, but no later than 120 hours (5 days) after unprotected vaginal intercourse.

How effective are Emergency Contraceptive Pills (Plan B)?

When you have sex without using birth control, risk of pregnancy depends on where you are in your menstrual cycle. If 100 women had unprotected sex (sex without birth control) in the fertile part of their cycle, about 8 of them would become pregnant. If you use Plan B, you reduce your chance of getting pregnant by about 89%. In other words, if those same 100 women took Plan B, only 1 would become pregnant. The sooner you use Plan B, the more effective it is. It is most effective (up to 95%) if used within the first 24 hours after unprotected intercourse and 89% effective if used within 72 hours, but studies show it is still effective up to 120 hours (5 days) after unprotected sex.

How Does it Work to Prevent Pregnancy?

The two-pill regimen contains progestin, a female reproductive hormone. The amount of hormone in the pills creates an inhospitable environment for a pregnancy to occur. This includes preventing an egg from being released or preventing sperm from meeting the egg. These disruptions are temporary, lasting only a few days.

Emergency Contraception does not cause an abortion to occur. If a pregnancy is already established, ECP will not harm the developing fetus.

How is it Used?

The pills must be started as soon as possible—but no later than 120 hours (5 days) after unprotected sex. Talk to your clinician for further help with your decision.

What are the Risks and Side Effects?

Temporary side effects after using Emergency Contraception are possible. Approximately 23% of women who use Plan B have nausea and 6% have vomiting. Abdominal pain, headache, breast tenderness, fatigue, and dizziness are also possible temporary side effects. You may also experience spotting or a delay in your next menstrual cycle.

Persistent bleeding and abdominal pain needs immediate medical attention.

If I Need Emergency Contraception, How Do I Get It?

If you think you need Emergency Contraception and you are 17 or over, you can go to the Pharmacy at Student Health Services (or any other pharmacy) and ask for Plan B or Emergency Contraceptive Pills. Once you have the pills, follow the instructions for taking them on the other side of this handout. Alternatively, you can make an appointment with a practitioner at Student Health Services, and they can help you decide if Emergency Contraception is right for you, give you instructions for taking ECP, and help you choose a reliable form of birth control if you need one. If you are 16 or younger, you need to make an appointment with a practitioner to get a prescription for ECP. Some pharmacies in California can give ECP to people 16 or younger as well. To find one, go to www.not-2-late.com.

(See other side)

REFERENCES:

Hatcher et al., *Contraceptive Technology, 18th ed.*, Chapter 12, Ardent Media, Inc., New York, 2004.
<http://ec.princeton.edu>



How to take Emergency Contraceptive Pills (Plan B)

- ◆ Plan B consists of 2 tablets.
- ◆ Take the first tablet as soon as possible within 120 hours after unprotected intercourse and the second tablet 12 hours after the first one. Alternatively, you can take both pills at once.
- ◆ You may experience nausea or vomiting when taking Plan B. If you vomit within 1 hour of taking Plan B, contact a healthcare provider to see if you should repeat the dose.
- ◆ Other temporary side effects that may occur are abdominal pain, fatigue, headache, dizziness, breast tenderness and diarrhea. These will go away in 1-2 days.

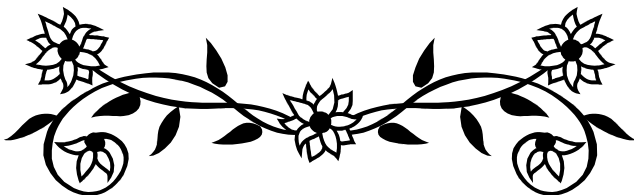
If you experience bleeding that lasts longer than a few days, becomes heavier and/or is accompanied by severe abdominal pain that lasts longer than 2 days, or becomes worse, contact your healthcare provider.

- ◆ You may also experience a lighter or heavier period (menstrual bleeding), and your period might come earlier or later than normal. If your period is more than a week late, contact your health care provider.
- ◆ Plan B does not protect against HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).
- ◆ Plan B should not be taken if you are already pregnant, because it will not work. If you think you may already be pregnant, make an appointment with a health care provider right away to find out if you can still use Plan B.
- ◆ Do not have unprotected intercourse AFTER taking Plan B, because you will not be protected against pregnancy. Use a regular form of birth control such as condoms or regular birth control pills.

REFERENCES:

<http://ec.princeton.edu>

<http://www.go2planb.com/ForConsumers/Index.aspx>



Why not use ECP all the time?

- ◆ **not as effective as a regular method of contraception.**
- ◆ **more costly than a regular form of birth control**
- ◆ **greater chance of side effects**

Want to know more?

- ◆ **How do I find out if I'm already pregnant?**
- ◆ **How do I know when my fertile period is during my cycle?**
- ◆ **I'd like to find out more about "Plan A" (a regular form of birth control). Where can I learn about my options?**

If you'd like answers to any of these questions, or any other questions you may have, please go to the reception desk at Student Health Services and ask to see a Health Educator or a Health Care Clinician. You may also call 909-869-4000 to make an appointment.