

Emergency Contraception Information Sheet

(This pill is also available over the counter at most drug stores for those 18 years of age and older)

What is EC?

Emergency contraception (EC) is an emergency birth control method for use within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse.

Why use EC?

When taken within 72 hours after unprotected vaginal intercourse (e.g. no or failed contraception, broken condom, sexual assault), EC can prevent pregnancy.

How effective is EC?

The sooner it is taken after vaginal intercourse, the better it can work. EC reduces the risk of pregnancy from around 8% to about 1%. This represents an 89% reduction in the risk from any one act of unprotected intercourse.

How does EC work?

Depending on where one is in their menstrual cycle, the pills work by:

- Stopping release of an egg from the ovary
- Disrupting fertilization by the sperm
- Preventing a fertilized egg from implanting in the lining of the uterus

How to take EC?

- Treatment should be started within 72 hours of intercourse
- First dose is taken immediately; the other dose is taken 12 hours later
- If either of the pills are lost because of vomiting, a replacement should be taken

Side effects of EC

Nausea: Some women experience temporary nausea.

Vomiting: Contact Health Services if this occurs – it may be necessary to repeat a dose

Menstrual Cycle: The next period may be a few days earlier or later than usual. If it has not started by the time your next period is due, return to Health Services for a pregnancy test and examination.

Breast Tenderness: Some will experience this temporarily.

Cramping: May occur.

Studies show no increased risk of birth defects in women using emergency contraception prior to or during early pregnancy.

Please Note

“Morning-after pill” treatment is an emergency measure. In general, it should not be taken repeatedly. Instead, an acceptable method of ongoing birth control should be considered.

An appointment should be made to discuss options and to obtain a prescription if the chosen method requires one. Other aspects of fostering good health, including sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention, will be discussed as appropriate.

As with all hormonal contraceptive methods, the “morning-after pill” gives NO protection from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).