



**YOUR
HEALTH.
YOUR
CHOICE.**

Emergency Contraception (hormonal)

Talk to your partner about birth control before you have sex. You can use latex condoms to lower your chances of getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and prevent an unwanted pregnancy.

What are emergency contraceptive pills?

The four-pill emergency contraceptive and Plan B are two types of hormonal emergency methods of birth control. You should take emergency contraception (EC) as soon as possible after unprotected sexual intercourse. EC is most effective if taken within 72 hours, but there is evidence that it is effective up to five days.

How do emergency contraceptive pills work?

EC is believed to affect the lining of the uterus and prevent the egg from becoming fertilized.

How effective are emergency contraceptive pills?

The four-pill EC option has been shown to reduce the risk of pregnancy by 75 – 95% if administered within 24 hours. After that, the effectiveness is reduced each day. Plan B has been shown to reduce the risk of pregnancy by 89%.

How do you use emergency contraceptive pills?

There are two types of hormonal EC.

The first type is four-pill EC. You take two pills right away, and two more twelve hours later. You may get an upset stomach or throw up. Take one Gravol tablet 30 minutes before the second set of pills. You should eat something before you take the second set of pills, and you can also take them with a glass of milk. If you throw up within an hour of taking either set of pills, call your clinician or clinic, as you may need to take another set of pills.

The second type is Plan B; with this you take two pills in total. You may take the first pill as soon as possible, and the second twelve hours later or you may take both pills at the same time. Plan B is less likely to cause nausea or vomiting, and is slightly more effective. This method also costs more money.

It is important to use condoms or a latex barrier with sexual partners to decrease the risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection.

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You might bleed a bit after EC, but this may not be your period. EC may make your period come earlier or later than usual. If your period is three weeks late or if it is different, call your clinician or clinic. You may need a pregnancy test.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of emergency contraceptive pills?

Some women might have more serious side effects. Talk to your clinician about the risk of side effects before you use EC.

Advantages

- * You can use it if you had sex without using birth control.
- * You can use it if the birth control method you used didn't work.
- * Your chances of getting pregnant are very low.
- * Most women can use it safely.

Disadvantages

- * You might throw up or feel sick.
- * You may bleed between periods.
- * You might feel pain.
- * You might have diarrhea.
- * Your chances of having an ectopic pregnancy are slightly higher. An ectopic pregnancy is a pregnancy outside of the uterus in the wrong place.

Where can you get emergency contraceptive pills?

You can get Plan B without a prescription from most birth control clinics and pharmacies. Call them first to make sure they have it. The four-pill EC requires a prescription.

If you need further information or would like to book an appointment, call:

Planned Parenthood Toronto Health Services for youth ages 13 to 29. 416-927-7171. Health Services offers same-day, scheduled and drop-in appointments. For more information visit www.ppt.on.ca.

Women's Programming at the Bay Centre for Birth Control for women of all ages at 416-351-3700.

Youth can also access information about sexual health by calling the Teen Sex InfoLine at 416-961-3200 or chat live using MSN messenger at spiderbytes@hotmail.com from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Monday to Wednesday and 12 noon to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. You can also email us a question anytime at askus@spiderbytes.ca or visit www.spiderbytes.ca.