

Patient Information for Informed Consent:
EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILLS (ECPs)

Before you take emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs), be sure you understand both the benefits and the possible problems of using ECPs. This information sheet also lists the danger signs you should watch for. If you have any questions as you read, we will be happy to talk about them with you.

Emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs) are hormonal pills (similar to birth control pills) that you take to try to prevent pregnancy after you have unprotected vaginal intercourse. Either your birth control method failed (for example your condom broke) or you didn't use a method.

The pills either keep the ovary from releasing an egg, thicken cervical mucus or change the lining of the uterus in such a way that a fertilized egg may not attach and develop into a pregnancy.

There are alternatives to ECPs. When a copper intrauterine device (IUD) is inserted within 7 days of a single act of unprotected intercourse, it may prevent pregnancy. It may also be left in place for ongoing contraception. Or you can choose to "wait and see." Discuss all of the choices with your health care provider.

The sooner ECPs are taken, the better they work to prevent pregnancy. It is best to start the pills within 72 hours (3days) of unprotected vaginal intercourse. When taken within the first 72 hours after intercourse, emergency contraception pills prevent pregnancy about 75-89% of the time. Studies have shown that even if ECPs are taken as late as 120 hours (5days) after unprotected intercourse they may prevent pregnancy. It appears to be less effective the later it is used.

How well the pills work depends on how soon after intercourse they are started and what day in your menstrual cycle unprotected intercourse takes place. This method fails to prevent pregnancy in some cases, because:

- A fertilized egg already has implanted in the uterus
- Too much time passed since unprotected vaginal intercourse
- Failure of the drug itself.

You will get the FDA approved information provided by the pill manufacturer. You should read this information and ask questions about anything you do not understand.

A sensitive urine pregnancy test should be done before taking ECPs if you think there is any chance that you could already be pregnant. (If your last period was late, light, or short, or if you feel pregnant.)

You should not use ECPs if you are (or think you are) already pregnant. However if you are pregnant or if the pills fail and pregnancy occurs, there have not been any reports of serious side effects to the woman or to the fetus from taking the pills.

Rare but serious problems or complications, particularly with blood clots, can occur with the regular use of birth control pills, as stated in the FDA information. It is not known whether blood-clotting problems (or other complications) can also occur when birth control pills are used for emergency contraception, but medical experts do not think so because the exposure to the pills is so short.

Some reactions to these pills (for about 24 hours) may include:

- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Breast tenderness
- Irregular bleeding
- Headache or dizziness

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After taking ECPs, your next period could be early or late, or could be lighter or heavier, or could be the same as usual. If you use ECPs more than once in a monthly cycle, the chances of having problems with your next period will be greater.

If you see a clinician for any reason before you get your next period, you should tell him/her that you have taken ECPs.

If you do not want to become pregnant, it is important to think of a more reliable form of ongoing birth control. After using ECPs, some women continue on birth control pills or use an IUD. Ask about the options at your clinic.

Having unprotected sex may have put you at risk for sexually transmitted Infections (STIs) and a serious infection could cause sterility. If you think you could be at risk for STIs, you should talk to your clinician about getting tested.

You should come back to the clinic for a checkup four weeks after taking these pills if you have not had a normal period, or if you fell like you could be pregnant, or if you have any early signs of pregnancy (such as feeling sick to your stomach, feeling very tired, breast swelling or tenderness).

Instructions for Use: EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILLS (ECPs)

How to Take the Emergency Contraception Pills

Option 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You have been given pills named _____. 2. You should swallow ____ pill(s) as soon as possible within 120 hours after unprotected intercourse. The sooner you take them, the better they work to prevent pregnancy. 3. Then, swallow ____ more pill(s) <u>12 hours</u> after you take the first pills.
Option 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You have been given pills named _____. 2. You should swallow all of the pills at one time as soon as possible within 120 hours after unprotected intercourse. The sooner you take them the better they work to prevent pregnancy.

To prevent feeling sick to your stomach or throwing up:

- Do not take the pills on an empty stomach
- You can get something for nausea at the drugstore without a prescription (like Dramamine® or Bonine®) to take about an hour before taking ECPs if you want to
- If using Option 1, try to time the pills so that you take the second dose before going to bed.

Call the clinic if you:

- Have questions
- Think you have a problem or that you might be pregnant
- Miss your period
- Are so sick to your stomach or are throwing up so much that you can't take the second dose of pills (if using Option 1).

Using ECP does not protect against sexually transmitted infections. Severe infection could cause sterility. If you or your partner have other sexual partners, you also should use latex condoms to prevent infections.

Regular physical examinations for routine health care and for screening for sexually transmitted infections and cancer are strongly recommended.