You May Want Emergency Contraception If

- His condom broke or slipped off, and he ejaculated inside your vagina.
- You forgot to take your birth control pills.
- Your diaphragm, cap, or shield slipped out of place, and he ejaculated inside your vagina.
- You miscalculated your "safe" days.
- He didn't pull out in time.
- You weren't using any birth control.
- He forced you to have unprotected vaginal sex.

Contact your health care provider immediately if you have had unprotected intercourse and you think you might become pregnant. **Ask about emergency contraception.**

Planned Parenthood®

www.plannedparenthood.org
www.teenwire.com
Other publications —
www.ppfastore.org

EC — Emergency Contraception

2675 9/08–180 2.13.5
ISBN 1-930996-91-8
Printed in the U.S.A.

How Well Emergency Contraception Works

- **Progestin-only EC reduces the risk of pregnancy by 89 percent if started within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse.** For example, eight out of 100 women will become pregnant after having unprotected sex once during the second or third week of their cycles. But only one woman out of 100 will become pregnant after taking progestin-only EC.
- **Combination EC reduces the risk of pregnancy by 75 percent if started within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse.** Only two women out of 100 will become pregnant after taking combination EC.

Emergency contraception is meant as backup birth control only. EC is not as effective as the correct and consistent use of reversible contraception — the IUD, the shot, the pill, the patch, or the ring.

EC does not continue to prevent pregnancy during the rest of the cycle. Other methods of birth control must be used.

Emergency contraception offers no protection against sexually transmitted infections. You may want to consider testing for sexually transmitted infections if there is a possibility that unprotected sex put you at risk.

How to Get Emergency Contraception

Plan B is now available over the counter for women 18 and older. Plan B and other forms of emergency contraception are also available by prescription for all women. Contact your local Planned Parenthood at 1-800-230-PLAN to get EC or to get a prescription for EC if you are younger than 18. You may also get EC at your local pharmacy if you are older than 18.

If you are younger than 18, you may want to ask your clinician for a prescription for EC before you need it. This will allow you to use EC in emergency situations without having to wait to get an appointment.

Costs Vary Widely

Costs depend on which of the following services are needed. Here are some estimates:

EC	Range of Costs
Plan B	$10 – $60
one pack of combination pills	$20 – $50
visit with health care provider	$35 – $150
pregnancy test	$10 – $20
Range of Total Cost	$10 – $255

Fees may be less at family planning clinics and health centers. Some use a sliding scale based on income. Costs vary from community to community, based on regional and local expenses. Contact your nearest Planned Parenthood health center at 1-800-230-PLAN for information about costs in your area.

Emergency IUD Insertion

IUDs can also be used as backup birth control. A clinician can insert a Copper T 380A IUD (ParaGard®) for emergency contraception within five days of unprotected intercourse. It can be left in place for up to 12 years for very effective contraception. Or the IUD can be removed after your next menstrual period, when it is certain that you are not pregnant. Emergency IUD insertion reduces the risk of pregnancy by 99.9 percent.

For more information about the advantages and disadvantages of the IUD as a regular method of birth control, read the Planned Parenthood pamphlet, *Understanding IUDs.*

Update — Jon Knowles, September 2008
Original version — Jon Knowles, 1996

Reprinted 2008. © 2008 Planned Parenthood® Federation of America, Inc. All rights reserved. Planned Parenthood®, PPFA®, the logo of "nested Ps," plannedparenthood.org®, teenwire.com®, and "America's most trusted name in women's health.®" are registered service marks of PPFA.

All other trademarks used in this publication are the property of their respective owners.

ISBN 1-930996-91-8

Emergency Contraception

Planned Parenthood®
America's most trusted name in women's health.®

Reference ID: 3921494

- **EC can prevent pregnancy *after* unprotected vaginal intercourse.** *It is also called "the morning-after pill," emergency birth control, or backup birth control.*
- **EC must be started within 120 hours — five days — after unprotected intercourse.**
- **The sooner it is started, the better.** *EC reduces the risk of pregnancy by 75–89 percent when the first dose is taken within 72 hours.*

EC contains hormones found in birth control pills and prevents pregnancy by stopping ovulation or fertilization. Theoretically, EC could also prevent implantation, but that has not been proven scientifically.

Plan B® is a brand of hormone pills approved by the FDA specifically for emergency contraception. Certain birth control pills may also be prescribed for use as emergency contraception. Some EC regimens use "combination pills" with estrogen and progestin — synthetic hormones like the ones a woman's body makes. Plan B has progestin only.

EC will not cause an abortion or affect an existing pregnancy. Still, a woman should not use emergency contraception if she is pregnant.

How to Use EC

Plan B can be taken in one dose or in two doses, 12 hours apart. Combined hormone pills must be taken in two doses, 12 hours apart. The number of pills in a dose varies with the brand of the pill. Use the same brand for both doses.

Swallow the pill(s) in the first dose as soon as possible, up to 120 hours — five days — after having unprotected sex. EC may cause nausea and vomiting. This risk is much higher for combination pills than for progestin-only pills.

To reduce the risk of nausea, you may want to take an anti-nausea medication, such as Dramamine or Bonine one hour before taking EC.

If you are taking the pills in two doses, swallow the second dose 12 hours after taking the first. If you vomited after the first dose, be sure to use an anti-nausea medication one hour before taking the second dose. Or you may want to take the second dose as a vaginal suppository by inserting the pills with your fingers as high into your vagina as you can reach. (The medication will be absorbed through the vaginal tissue.)

If you vomit the second dose, do not take any extra pills. They probably won't reduce the risk of pregnancy. But they will probably make you sick to your stomach.

Pill Brand	**1st Dose** (within 120 hours)	**2nd Dose** (12 hours later)
Plan B	1 white pill	1 white pill*
Alesse	5 pink pills	5 pink pills
Aviane	5 orange pills	5 orange pills
Cryselle	4 white pills	4 white pills
Enpresse	4 orange pills	4 orange pills
Jolessa	4 pink pills	4 pink pills
Lessina	5 pink pills	5 pink pills
Levlen	4 light-orange pills	4 light-orange pills
Levlite	5 pink pills	5 pink pills
Levora	4 white pills	4 white pills
Lo/Ovral	4 white pills	4 white pills
Low-Ogestrel	4 white pills	4 white pills
Lutera	5 white pills	5 white pills
Lybrel	6 yellow pills	6 yellow pills
Nordette	4 light-orange pills	4 light-orange pills
Ogestrel	2 white pills	2 white pills
Ovral	2 white pills	2 white pills
Portia	4 pink pills	4 pink pills
Quasense	4 white pills	4 white pills
Seasonale	4 pink pills	4 pink pills
Seasonique	4 light-blue-green pills	4 light-blue-green pills
Tri-Levlen	4 yellow pills	4 yellow pills
Triphasil	4 yellow pills	4 yellow pills
Trivora	4 pink pills	4 pink pills

*Both doses of Plan B can be taken at the same time.

After You Take the Pills

- Your next period may be earlier or later than usual.
- Your flow may be heavier, lighter, more spotty, or the same as usual.
- Tell any other health care provider you may see before you get your next period that you have taken EC.
- Schedule a follow-up visit with your clinician if you do not have your period in three weeks or if you have symptoms of pregnancy.
- Be sure to use another method of contraception if you have vaginal intercourse any time before you get your period again.
- Continue using the birth control method of your choice for as long as you want to avoid pregnancy.

Side Effects

Side effects associated with the use of EC usually taper off within a day or two.

- Half of the women who take the combination pills feel sick to their stomachs, but only for about 24 hours. Less than one out of five women vomit with combination pills.
- The risk of nausea and vomiting is much lower with progestin-only EC, like Plan B — less than one in four women feel sick to their stomachs.
- Breast tenderness, irregular bleeding, dizziness, and headaches may also occur.

There have been no reports of serious complications among the millions of women who have used EC.

Frequent use of EC may cause periods to become irregular and unpredictable.

The side effects of anti-nausea medication may include drowsiness. Please follow the precautions on the package insert.

continued over →