

**Q** What do I need to do after I take emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs)?

**A** After you have taken ECPs, your next period may come sooner or later than normal. Most women will get their period within 7 days of the expected date. Your period may also be heavier, lighter, or more spotty than normal.

If you do not get your period in 3 weeks or if you think you might be pregnant after taking ECPs, get a pregnancy test to find out for sure.

Use another contraceptive method if you have sex any time before your next period starts. Talk to your doctor about how to choose a birth control method that is right for you.

**Q** My girlfriend took emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs), and they did not work. If she stays pregnant, will there be something wrong with her baby?

**A** **No.** Studies have been done with women who did not know they were pregnant and kept taking regular birth control pills.

These studies have found no greater risk for birth defects.

**Q** Are emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs) the same thing as the abortion pill?

**A** **No.** Emergency contraception works before pregnancy begins. It will not work if a woman is already pregnant.

**Q** How do I get emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs)?

**A** Please contact the health centre or hospital in your area where a medical doctor is present.

## INFORMATION FOR MEN & WOMEN

# Emergency Contraception

...Your  
Questions  
Answered



*Produced by*

**THE MATERNAL & CHILD  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
and  
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Ministry  
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## Q What is Emergency Contraception?

A Emergency contraception is used to help keep a woman from getting pregnant after she has had sex without using contraception or if the method failed. If you are already pregnant, emergency contraception **will not work**.

Use emergency contraception if:

- You did not expect to have sex and did not use contraception.
- You were forced to have sex.
- The condom broke or came off.
- Your diaphragm slips out of place.
- He didn't pull out in time.
- You missed at least two or three contraceptive pills in a row (depending on which pill brand you use).
- You were late getting your family planning shot.

In short, any reason that a woman is concerned that she might become pregnant is a reason.

Emergency contraception should not be used as a regular form of contraception. Other family planning methods are much better at keeping women from becoming pregnant. Talk with your doctor or health care provider to decide which one is right for you.

## Q What are the types of emergency contraception and how do they work?

A There are different types of emergency contraception:

- **Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECPs)** e.g. levonorgestrel 0.75mg (currently available on the advice of a medical doctor).
- **Plan B Oral Contraceptive Pills (OCP)** – Plan B is a progestin-only ECP. It is made for use as emergency contraception. Plan B is like progestin-only contraceptive pills, but contains higher levels of the hormone. Take two pills immediately after the sexual intercourse then the next two pills 12 hours apart.

Women who are breastfeeding or cannot take estrogen should use progestin-only ECPs (like Plan B). Some women feel sick and throw up after taking ECPs.

## Q When should ECPs be taken?

A As soon as possible after unprotected intercourse. The first dose should be taken within 72 hours after intercourse.

## Q How well does emergency contraception work?

A When used correctly, emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs) work very well at preventing pregnancy by preventing ovulation. They do not cause abortion.

Consider that about 8 in 100 women who

have unprotected sex one time during the fertile part of their cycle will become pregnant. If these 100 women take an ECP, about 2 will become pregnant.

## Q Does emergency contraception have side effects?

A Some women feel sick and throw up after taking ECPs. Headache, cramps, and fatigue also can occur. Over-the-counter drugs can reduce the risk of feeling sick and throwing up. Take these pills 30 minutes before taking ECPs. If you throw up after taking ECPs, call your healthcare provider immediately.

## Q Will emergency contraception protect me from sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?

A **NO.** Emergency contraception can only lower the risk of becoming pregnant after having unprotected sex.

Always use condoms to lower your risk of getting an STI.

## Q Are emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs) the same thing as the "morning after pill"?

A **Yes.** ECPs are often called the "morning after pill," which is wrong because ECPs don't have to be taken the morning after.

You should always take ECPs as soon as you can after having unprotected sex, but they can work up to 5 days later.