



Emergency Contraceptive Pill

What is the Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP)?

The emergency contraceptive pill (ECP) is used to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex. You can get it from sexual health clinics, after-hours clinics, pharmacies and your health care provider.

You can take ECP up to five days after unprotected sex. Unprotected sex means:

- You did not use birth control.
- A condom broke or slipped off.
- You forgot to take your birth control pills.
- You were late getting your Depo shot or late applying the patch or inserting the ring.
- You took medication while on the pill, patch or ring that could decrease the effectiveness of that method.
- You were sexually assaulted.

How does it work?

Emergency contraceptive also known as Plan B has a single hormone called progestin. It works to prevent an egg from being released or fertilized, or to prevent a fertilized egg from implanting in the lining of the uterus. It will not protect you against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

How effective is it?

ECP works best if taken within the first day after unprotected sex (the sooner the better), but can be effective for up to five days.

How do I use ECP?

- There are two pills which should be taken at the same time.
- Plan B should not be used as your regular contraceptive and should not be used more than once in a menstrual cycle.

What are the side effects or possible complications?

ECP may cause nausea and vomiting. Some women find that taking it after food helps.

You may have light bleeding or spotting for a few days. Your next period should come at its normal time, but it might be a few days early or a few days late. If your period is late by more than a week, talk to your health care provider about having a pregnancy test.

If pregnancy does occur, although rare, there is an increased risk of tubal pregnancy. If this happens you might experience: severe abdominal pain, no period, and/or unexpected vaginal bleeding, and dizziness and fainting. You should seek medical help right away.

What else do I need to know?

If you are on the pill, start your pack again on the day after you complete the ECP. (This may mean you will throw out a pill). You must use a backup birth control such as condoms for seven days.

Consider testing for STIs two weeks after unprotected sex.

If you are not already on birth control, find a method that works for you and remember to protect yourself from STIs by using a condom every time you have sex.

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Who can you talk to if I have more questions?

If you have concerns or questions call and ask for Sexual Health, or visit our youth website at www.thephakz.ca, or the health unit website below.