



Association of
Reproductive
Health
Professionals

HEALTH MATTERS

Your Post-Sex Guide to NOT Getting Pregnant

www.arhp.org/healthmatters

Facts About Emergency Contraception Pills (levonorgestrel methods)

Who is Emergency Contraception (EC) for?

EC is for a woman who:

- had sex without using birth control **OR** had trouble using her regular method (missed pills, broken condom, etc.)

AND

- does **NOT** want to get pregnant.

What is EC?

EC comes in different forms

- Plan B® One-Step EC is 1 pill (1.5mg) that contains the same hormone used in many birth control pills (called levonorgestrel). This option is available without a prescription if you are 17 or older.
- Next Choice™ EC is 2 pills (0.75 mg each) that contain the same hormone used in many birth control pills (called levonorgestrel). This generic option requires a prescription if you are under 17. It is available without a prescription if you are 17 or older.
- Levonorgestrel is 2 pills (0.75 mg each) that contains the same hormone used in many birth control pills. This generic option is available without a prescription if you are 17 or older.
- ella® is 1 pill (30 mg) that contains a progesterone receptor modulator (called ulipristal acetate). This option is available only with a prescription.
- These types of EC are sometimes called “the morning after pill.”
- There are some other EC options, too.
 - Some types of daily combined birth control pills can be used as EC. The number of pills you need to take depends on the type of pill.
 - A Copper-T Intrauterine Device (IUD)
 - Go to www.not-2-late.com to learn more about these other forms of emergency contraception.

How does EC work?

- If you are already pregnant, EC will not work.
- **Take EC as soon as possible after having unprotected sex. EC may work up to 5 days (120 hours) after you’ve had unprotected sex. The sooner you take EC, the better.**

HAND THIS SHEET TO YOUR PHARMACIST

I need Emergency Contraception

Health Matters is a publication of ARHP for the general public that provides a brief overview of existing facts and data on various topics related to reproductive health.

- EC does NOT have to be taken in the morning. A woman can take it any time AND should take it as soon as she can.

EC will:

- **NOT** protect you from sexually transmitted infections or HIV/AIDS.
- **NOT** be effective if you are already pregnant.
- **NOT** cause harm if you are already pregnant.

How do I take EC?

- Take the EC pill or pills As Soon As Possible!

Remember

EC may work up to 5 days (120 hours) after you've had unprotected sex, but it is best to take it as soon as possible after unprotected sex.

- If you use the type of EC that has 2 pills, take them both **at the same time**. The directions on the package of Next Choice may say to take the pills 12 hours apart, BUT
 - that is harder to do AND
 - good research shows that the pills work just as well if you take them both at the same time

Where can I get EC?

- If you are 17 or older, you can get Plan B One-Step Next Choice, or Levonorgestrel without a prescription from most drugstores. It is stocked behind the counter, so you will need to ask for it. You may be asked to show proof of your age (ID). Both women and men can purchase Plan B One-Step Next Choice or Levonorgestrel.
- A prescription is required to obtain ella® for women of all ages.
- Typically, when you get Plan B One-Step Next Choice, or Levonorgestrel without a prescription it isn't covered by insurance. If you get a prescription from a clinician, it is possible that it will be covered. Each plan is different, so contact your insurance company to find out if, and under what conditions, it is covered.

- If you are 16 or younger you will need a prescription from a health care professional to get EC.
- Women of all ages need a prescription from a healthcare professional to get ella.
- Family planning clinics, like Planned Parenthood (www.plannedparenthood.com), may give you EC for less money than drugstores. Call your local clinic to see if it has EC.
- To find health care professionals near you who will give you a prescription for EC, go to www.not-2-late.com.

After taking EC pills, some women:

- feel sick to their stomach
- feel like throwing up (vomiting)
- are dizzy or tired
- have stomach pain, sore breasts, or headaches

If you throw up after taking the pills, call your doctor or pharmacist. You should get your period a month (or sooner) after taking EC. **If you don't get your period in a month, take a pregnancy test and talk with your health care provider.**

EC is a good second chance to prevent pregnancy if you had sex without birth control or had problems using your regular method. After you use EC, talk with your health care professional to find the best type of birth control for you to use as a regular method in the future. Visit ARHP's Contraception Resource Center to learn about all the methods that are available: www.arhp.org/Topics/Contraception.

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