



## Emergency Contraception

### What is Emergency Contraception?

Emergency contraception (EC) can prevent pregnancy after unprotected vaginal intercourse as a result of sexual assault, a contraceptive method failure, or nonuse of a contraceptive method. It is also called "morning-after" contraception, emergency birth control, or backup birth control. Emergency contraception does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

### EC is NOT Abortion

There is considerable public confusion about the difference between emergency contraception and a medical abortion. Emergency contraception helps prevent pregnancy; an abortion terminates pregnancy.

EC will not induce an abortion in a woman who is already pregnant, nor will it affect the developing pre-embryo or embryo (Van Look & Stewart, 1998).

### How Does Emergency Contraception Work?

EC contains hormones that reduce the risk of pregnancy if started within 120 hours of unprotected intercourse. The treatment is more effective the sooner it begins. Plan B® is currently the only product marketed specifically as emergency contraception.

### When Should I Use EC? If...

- You didn't use a form of birth control (i.e. condoms, spermicidal, diaphragm, birth control pills)
- The condom broke
- You were late for your birth control injection
- You missed 2 or more birth control pills in a row or started a pack late
- You were forced to have sex
- You had a contraceptive method failure
- You were raped

### After you take the pills ...

- Your next period may be earlier or later than usual.
- Your flow may be heavier, lighter, spottier, or the same as usual.



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- Tell any 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 a 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

## Possible Side Effects

- 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 - less than one in four women feel sick to their stomachs.
- Breast tenderness, irregular bleeding, dizziness, and headaches may also occur.

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

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.

## How to Get EC

On August 24, 2006, the USDA approved the emergency contraceptive pill Plan B for sale without prescription to women and men ages 18 and older. According to the distributors of Plan B, it will be stocked by all major pharmacy chains, but be sure to call ahead to make sure that it is available at your pharmacy. You will need to ask the pharmacist for Plan B; it will not be on the shelves but instead it will be kept behind the pharmacy counter.

To get Plan B without a prescription, you will be asked to show proof that you are age 18 or over. Women age 18 and over can buy Plan B without a prescription.

The cost of EC can vary depending on where you get them so be sure to ask up front. In RI, the average cost is \$50.



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If you are under the age of 18 you will need a prescription to obtain Plan B®. Please make an appointment in Health Services to talk to a Nurse Practitioner, x6220.

For more information on EC contact the Gertrude Meth Hochberg Women's Center at extension 6854 or the Health Services at extension 6220.

## **Where Do I get EC?**

Over the Counter (Call first for hours and updated prices)

[Planned Parenthood of RI](#), 401-421-9620

Target, Smithfield, 401-232-2854

Rite Aid, North Providence, 401-353-3113

CVS, Greenville, 401-231-5120

CVS, Woonsocket, 401-762-3172

Stop & Shop, Greenville, 401 949-1848

Stop & Shop, Lincoln Mall, 401-334-6006

## **By Prescription**

**Health Services, 1st Floor Hall 16, 401-232-6220**

## **Additional resources**

24-hour EC hotline: 1-888-668-2528

EC website: <http://ec.princeton.edu>

Planned Parenthood: [www.plannedparenthood.org](http://www.plannedparenthood.org)

To speak confidentially to someone on campus contact:

Resident Directors

Resident Assistants

Health Services: 401-232-6220



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Counseling Services: 401-232-6045

Women's Center: 401-232-6854

Advocacy Helpline Program: 401-258-4209 (24/7)

Look at the listing of resources on our site.

To speak confidentially to someone off campus:

SATRC (RI Rape Crisis) 421-4100 (24 hrs/day)

Women & Infants Hospital 274-1100 (24 hrs/day)

## **STIs, HIV/AIDS, and Condoms**

If you are having sex, talk to your health care provider about birth control options. Bryant Health Services provides many types of birth control options.

EC and birth control pills do not protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS, making unprotected sex even more risky. Although not 100% effective, condoms will protect against BOTH unwanted pregnancy and STIs/HIV/AIDS.

If you have had unprotected sex, talk to your health care provider about screening for sexually transmitted infections.