About Emergency Contraceptive Pills

You can use Emergency Contraceptive pills (EC pills) if you had sex without using a birth control method or if your birth control method failed.

EC pills are taken after unprotected sex to prevent a pregnancy.

When should I use EC pills?

EC pills should be used as soon as possible if you had sex without protection. For example:

- You weren’t using any birth control method.
- The condom broke or slipped off.
- You forgot to take your birth control pills for 1 day in the first week or 3 days in the second or third week.
- Your contraceptive patch fell off and stayed off for longer than 24 hours or you were late changing your patch.
- Your vaginal ring was out for 3 hours or longer.

EC pills should not be used as a regular birth control method. Talk to your Family PACT provider about getting a regular method of birth control.

What do EC pills do?

EC pills lower the chances you will get pregnant after unprotected sex.

EC pills work best if you take them within 24 hours. But you must take them no later than 5 days after sex.

How do EC pills work?

EC pills:

- Stop the egg from leaving your ovaries.
- Stop sperm from getting to the egg.
- Keep the egg from attaching to the uterus.

What do some women like about EC pills?

- EC pills are a good backup if your birth control method fails.
- EC pills are safe and easy to use.

What do some women dislike?

- EC pills may make you feel sick to your stomach.
- Women will need a prescription to get some kinds of EC pills.

Women can use EC safely.

EC pills have not been shown to cause any health problems.

- You can use it even if you have a history of blood clots.
- You can use it even if you are breastfeeding.
- EC pills will not stop a pregnancy that has already started. It is not an abortion pill.
EC pills do not protect you from HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) or other infections people get from having sex.

How do I use EC Pills?
Your Family PACT provider or pharmacist will tell you how many and what type of pills to take. There are 3 different types of EC pills. Some contain ulipristal acetate, some have levonorgestrel, and others are regular birth control pills. Your provider will give you the EC pills that are best for you.

When EC comes in two doses, some providers may tell you to take both doses at the same time. Others may tell you to take each dose 12 hours apart. Both ways of taking EC pills are equally good.

The main thing to remember is:
- Take EC as soon as you can after the unprotected sex.
- It works best the sooner you take it.

Some women get an upset stomach after using EC pills. Over-the-counter products for treating nausea may help you with this.

If you vomit within 2 hours of taking EC pills, some providers advise repeating the EC dose, while others think that this is not needed. Ask your provider what they want you to do.

If you do not get your period within three weeks of taking EC, call your Family PACT provider and let them know.

What about the side effects of EC?
You may have these side effects when you use EC pills:
- You may feel sick to your stomach or vomit.
- You may have headaches or feel dizzy.
- Your breasts may feel tender.
- Your next period may come early or late, or you may spot between periods, or have changes in how much bleeding you have or how long your period is.

Where can I get EC pills?
Most pharmacies and many Family PACT providers have EC pills. A physical exam is not needed to get EC pills.
- Family PACT female clients can get EC at no cost
  - From their Family PACT provider
  - From a pharmacy with a prescription from their Family PACT provider
- Women and men of any age can buy the Plan B One-Step at a pharmacy without a prescription
- Women and men who are 15 or older can buy the one- or two–tablet levonorgestrel EC pills at a pharmacy without a prescription.