ECP offers no protection against HIV (AIDS) or sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, herpes, genital warts (HPV), hepatitis B and syphilis. If you are at risk for an unintended pregnancy because you didn't use birth control that offers STI protection, you may want to be tested for HIV and STIs.

Where can you get ECP?

A prescription is not required for ECP if you are a woman or man age 17 or older. You can get ECP at a pharmacy, drug store, or a family planning clinic. If you are younger than 17, or if you need a prescription for insurance reimbursement, you can contact a health care provider. You can get ECP in advance to have on hand if you need it.

For more information about how to obtain EC you can visit the website http://www.ec.princeton.edu.

Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECP)

How emergency contraceptive pills work

Emergency contraceptive pills (ECP) are used AFTER sexual intercourse. ECP reduces the risk of pregnancy when taken as soon as possible or within 5 days after sexual intercourse.

ECP works primarily by stopping a woman's body from releasing an egg (ovulation), so there is no egg present to be fertilized.

Emergency contraception may prevent pregnancy, but it will NOT stop an already-established pregnancy or harm a developing fetus. ECP does NOT cause an abortion.

How to use emergency contraceptive pills

ECP is now available in various "dedicated" products. They include ella and Plan B One-Step (both are 1 pill), and "2 pill" products that include Next Choice and Levonorgestrel tablets (generic Plan B). In addition, some combination (progestin and estrogen) pills can also be taken as emergency contraception.

ECPs should be taken as soon as possible (within 5 days) after unprotected intercourse or as directed by a health provider or pharmacist.



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Revised 2014 (continued)

If your period does not start within three weeks, see your health provider for an exam and a pregnancy test. Do not have unprotected sex in the days or weeks following ECP; use condoms and/ or use another birth control method until you get your period.

Effectiveness

Taking emergency contraceptive pills greatly reduces a woman's chance of pregnancy after unprotected intercourse. But, effectiveness rates for ECP are different from other birth control methods because the effectiveness rate is based on the pregnancy risk after a single act of sexual intercourse.

Studies show a range of effectiveness, depending on which ECP product is taken, how soon after sex ECP is taken (up to 72 hours or 120 hours) and on which day of the menstrual cycle unprotected intercourse occurred. ECPs should be taken as soon as possible within 5 days of unprotected sexual intercourse.

ECP are not recommended for routine use because it is less effective than other available contraceptives. ECP will not protect a woman from pregnancy if she has unprotected intercourse again after taking ECP. Unprotected intercourse should be avoided until another birth control method is used. Ask a health care provider about other birth control options after ECP use.

Benefits of ECP

Emergency contraceptive pills can be taken at any time a woman is concerned about unprotected intercourse that may cause any unintended pregnancy. It is the only method available for use after:

- The condom (male or female) slips, breaks or leaks.
- You missed your birth control pills.
- Your diaphragm or cervical cap was inserted incorrectly or removed too early.
- You used any other birth control method incorrectly.
- You were exposed to some medicines, drugs or other toxic agents (which can reduce the effectiveness of some methods).
- You had unprotected sex against your will.

Potential side effects and disadvantages

There are few reported side effects with ECP. A few women report nausea. Medicine for nausea is available. Ask your health care provider or a pharmacist. Other potential side effects include fatigue, breast tenderness, headache, abdominal pain and dizziness. ECP may change the amount, duration, and timing of the next menstrual period.

Potential risks

There are no known health risks to a woman taking ECP. There is no risk to women who are already pregnant; ECP will not work if a woman is already pregnant. EC pills do not harm a developing fetus. Repeated use of ECP is considered safe.