

FACT SHEET: EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION (EC)



When might I need emergency contraception?

- If you had unprotected sex, if a condom broke or slipped, or if you used any method of birth control incorrectly.
- Examples of using birth control incorrectly include missing a pill, having a late shot (Depo-Provera), and leaving a birth-control patch off for longer than 24 hours or a vaginal ring out for longer than three hours.

How does EC work?

- Most EC pills (Plan B One-Step®, Next Choice™) contain a hormone like the ones your body makes. ella™ is an EC pill that mimics and blocks a hormone.
- EC pills stop your ovaries from releasing eggs. Without an egg, you cannot get pregnant. No method of birth control is 100% effective, but EC pills lower the risk of pregnancy.
- **You can take EC up to 5 days (120 hours) after unprotected sex.** Most EC works best if you take it sooner, but ella® works just as well 4-5 days after sex as it does right after sex.
- You can't use EC pills to end a pregnancy.

How do I use EC pills?

- Take EC as soon as you can after unprotected sex. If your package has 2 pills, take both pills at the same time.

How do EC pills help me?

- EC is safe. EC pills do not work as well as a regular birth control method, but EC lowers your chance of getting pregnant after unprotected sex.

How will I feel after taking EC pills?

- You will most likely feel fine. EC has no long-term or severe side effects.
- You may have nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, breast pain, or abdominal pain for 1-2 days after taking the pills. To prevent nausea, you can take anti-nausea medicine (such as meclizine) one hour before you take EC.
- Your next period may come a few days early or a few days late. You may have spotting.

Do EC pills have risks?

- EC pills are very safe. There are no known risks.
- Pregnant women should not take EC pills.

Where can I get EC pills?

- Available at pharmacies, health centers or health care providers. Call ahead to see if they have it in stock. Or try www.not-2-late.com or www.goodrx.com.
- Women and men of any age can get some brands without a prescription. Women of all ages can only get ella® with a prescription.
- You should always have EC on hand in case you need it. Ask for refills on your prescription.

Do I need a medical check-up after taking plan b?

- Get a pregnancy test and, possibly, a pelvic exam within two weeks to be sure that Plan B worked and that you did not get a sexually transmitted infection.
- This visit is also a good time to discuss birth control options so that you can choose a method, or restart the method, that works for you.