

## Emergency Contraception Frequently Asked Questions

How effective is EC?

Over 95% of women who take EC do not become pregnant. Plan B (progestin-only) may be slightly more effective than other types of EC.

Is the "morning-after" pill the same as "emergency contraception (EC)"?

Yes, the "morning-after" pill and emergency contraception (EC) are the same thing. The term "emergency contraception" is preferred because this method of preventing pregnancy can be used several days after unprotected sex, not just the "morning after."

What is the difference between EC and RU-486?

RU-486 or Mifepristone (Mifeprex) also known as the French abortion pill interrupts an already existing pregnancy (49 days or less counting from the beginning of the last menstrual period) and should not be confused with emergency contraception. In contrast, EC will NOT disrupt an established pregnancy.

How long after unprotected sex can I take EC?

The current treatment schedule is one dose within 72 hours after unprotected sex, and a second dose 12 hours after the first dose. EC should be taken as soon after unprotected sex as is practical. New information suggests that EC can be used up to 5 days, or 120 hours, after unprotected sex. However, EC is much less effective if used after 72 hours.

What if I am late in taking the second dose of EC?

It is recommended that you take the second dose 12 hours after the first dose. Taking the second dose a little early or late (two hours early or late, for example) will probably not make a difference in how effective the pills are, but we really do not know for sure.

When should my next period come after I take EC?

Your next period should come more or less on time. It is more common for your period to be delayed than to come early, probably because ovulation is delayed in many women. After taking EC some women have irregular bleeding that is not really their period. The duration of the irregular bleeding is not predictable. You should have another, normal period within 3 weeks after taking EC. If not, you should visit a clinic and get a pregnancy test just to make sure you're not pregnant.

How many times can I use EC?

EC is not recommended for routine use as a method of birth control for sexually active women. Correct use of other birth control methods such as the pill, condoms, IUD, or the shot is a more effective and often less expensive way to prevent pregnancy.

Can I use EC if I am breastfeeding?

Yes, EC may be used, as there is no evidence of danger to the infant or mother. A single treatment of EC is unlikely to have an important effect on milk quantity or quality. Some hormones may pass into the breast milk, but they are unlikely to affect the infant adversely.

Can I get EC if I am under 18?

Yes, under California law, minors have the right to access confidential family planning services (including EC) without parental consent.

Does EC cause an abortion?

No! Emergency contraception prevents abortion, by preventing pregnancy. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the National Institutes of Health define pregnancy as starting with implantation of the egg in the uterus. EC will not work after implantation occurs. EC will not interrupt an established pregnancy.

What is Plan B?

Plan B<sup>®</sup> (levonorgestrel) is a safe and effective form of emergency contraception. Unlike older emergency contraceptive pills that contain both estrogen and progestin, Plan B<sup>®</sup> (levonorgestrel) contains only progestin. As a result, Plan B causes fewer side effects, like nausea.

If I am already pregnant, will taking EC harm my baby?

No! If emergency contraception is mistakenly taken during pregnancy, it will not harm your developing fetus. Using EC will not affect a woman's ability to become pregnant in the future.

Will EC effect my period?

EC can cause spotting or change the flow, length, and timing of your next period. In most cases this effect is minor. If your period is delayed by more than 7 days, consider getting a pregnancy test.