EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

Emergency Contraception (EC) is also known as Plan B or the morning-after pill and is a form of birth control that prevents an unintended pregnancy after engaging in unprotected sex.

If you suspect your contraceptive method failed, you did not use a barrier method, or you had non-consensual sex you can use EC immediately and up to five days after unprotected sex.

Just as the name implies, EC should be used in emergency situations because it is not as effective as birth control methods such as the pill or barrier methods. Furthermore, EC does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) like female condoms, male condoms or oral dams do.

Contraception Methods

Currently, there are four types of EC methods available in the United States. For individuals aged 17 years and older, progestin-only pills are available without a prescription.

This form is sold under the brand names of Plan B One-Step, Next Choice One Dose, Next Choice and Levonorgestrel Tablets. Progestin-only pills can reduce your risk of getting pregnant by 88% and they are less likely to have side effects than combination pills.

The second type of EC which is available by prescription contains ulipristal acetate. This form is highly effective, well tolerated and can be taken up to five days after unprotected sex.

The third type of EC contains both progesterin and estrogen. Many brands of daily birth control pills have this combination and can be used for emergency contraception. For more specific information check out http://ec.princeton.edu.

These pills can reduce your chances of getting pregnant by 75%, but you are more likely to experience side effects such as nausea and vomiting.

Lastly, the Copper-T IUD (intrauterine device) also known as Paragard, is a highly effective EC method. IUDs are small, T-shaped devices that are implanted into the uterus by a health care professional and are effective up to 10 years. This method does not deliver hormones to your body and it is ineffective in preventing STIs.

Common EC Myths

A person does not have to wait until the next day as the name implies. False. You can take EC immediately and up to 5 days after unprotected sex.

EC is the same as the abortion pill. False. EC works to prevent a pregnancy from occurring by preventing or inhibiting the release of an egg (ovulation) or interfering with the lining of the uterus and cervical mucus, impeding fertilization (Contraceptive Technology, 18th ed.).

Birth control is the first important step a woman must take toward the goal of her freedom.

— Margaret Sanger (Birth control activist)