

emergency contraception



If you have had sex in the last 5 days

- Did you or your partner **use any form of birth control** to prevent pregnancy? If no, there's a chance you could get pregnant.
- If you and your partner used a condom as your only method of birth control, did it **rip or slip** during sex? If yes, there's a chance you could get pregnant.
- If you did use a method of birth control (birth control pills and condoms) to prevent pregnancy, **did you use it correctly?** If no, there's a chance you could get pregnant.

You could be at risk of getting pregnant if...

1. You had unprotected intercourse in the last 5 days.

OR

2. You had a problem with or concern about how well your birth control method might have worked. For example,
- You **did not plan to** have sex and used nothing to prevent pregnancy.
 - You were **forced to have sex** and nothing was used to prevent pregnancy.
 - You used a **condom but it broke** or slipped during sex and nothing else was used to prevent pregnancy.
 - You're taking **birth control pills** but **missed** taking 2 or more pills in a row and you had unprotected sex.
 - You're using the **birth control patch** but it was **off for more than 24 hours** during the 3 weeks when it was supposed to be on your skin and you had unprotected sex.
 - You're using the **birth control ring** but took it **out for more than 3 hours** during the 3 weeks when it was supposed to be in your vagina and you had unprotected sex.
 - You're using the Depo-Provera shot but it has been **more than 2 weeks** since you should have gotten your next shot and you had unprotected sex.

Remember, "**withdrawal**" of the penis **does not work** to prevent pregnancy.

What is emergency contraception?

Emergency contraception is a **type of birth control** used to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex.

How do the pills work?

Emergency contraception pills can prevent

- An egg from being released from the ovary (ovulation). This is the main way it works.

Emergency contraception pills may also prevent

- An egg from being fertilized by the sperm (fertilization)
- A fertilized egg from attaching itself to the wall of the uterus (implantation)

Emergency contraception pills are NOT the same as RU-486 or Mifepristone, also called the abortion pill.

- Emergency contraception pills use the same hormones as regular birth control pills.
- If you're already pregnant and take emergency contraception pills, they won't cause a miscarriage or abortion.
- If you've taken emergency contraception but find out later that you were already pregnant, the pills won't cause birth defects if you continue the pregnancy.
- Emergency contraception pills do not prevent sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

What types of pills can I take?

Your pediatrician may prescribe one of the following:

- **Plan B® progestin-only pills.** These pills are specifically made for emergency contraception. Call the pharmacy before you go to see if they have the medicine in stock, what the cost is, and if the pills are covered by your insurance.
- **Special dose of regular birth control pills.** These pills can have the same effects as emergency contraception pills if taken as your pediatrician tells you.

Pills need to be taken within 5 days of unprotected sexual intercourse. Take them as soon as possible after unprotected sex.

- **Plan B progestin-only pills**—Take both pills at one time.
- **Special dose of regular birth control pills**—Take each dose 12 hours apart. *You may also want to take medicine that prevents nausea before you take the special dose of pills.* The pills work about 80% of the time to prevent pregnancy if taken around the time of ovulation. They won't work if you're already pregnant.

Some people have nicknamed emergency contraception pills the "morning after pill," but this information is wrong. There's more than 1 pill and the pills are not always taken the morning after. They can be taken up to 5 days after unprotected sex. However, the sooner you take them, the better they work.

Are the pills safe?

Emergency contraception pills are **safe** but as with all medicines **there can be side effects.** Nausea and vomiting may occur but are less likely with the Plan B progestin-only pill. Other side effects include *fatigue, tender breasts, headache, stomach pain, and dizziness.* These side effects usually last less than 24 hours. You may **notice changes in your next period.** Your period may come earlier or later, or be lighter or heavier than you're used to. The pills won't hurt your ability to get pregnant in the future. Because the pills won't protect you from getting pregnant the next time you have sex, you must still use your usual form of birth control.

Call your pediatrician if you vomit within 30 to 60 minutes after taking the pills, or if you have any other concerns. It is critical to call your pediatrician for an appointment within 2 weeks after taking emergency contraception. At the visit you can get a pregnancy test to make sure you did not get pregnant and a test for STDs.

Remember

If you're going to have sex...

- **Talk with your pediatrician about which type of regular birth control is best for you.** The choice to become sexually active is yours. Choosing not to have sex is the only way to avoid all STDs and avoid getting pregnant. Emergency contraception pills shouldn't be your regular form of birth control. However, you may want to have them on-hand just in case you need them to prevent pregnancy.
- **Always use a condom to reduce the risk of getting an STD.** Condoms work best when they are used the right way. No other form of birth control, including emergency contraception, can protect you from getting an STD.
- **Make sure that you are checked for an STD.** If you had unprotected sex, not only can you become pregnant, you could also get an STD. Often a simple urine test can screen for STDs.
- **Don't be afraid to say NO if you've changed your mind and don't want to have sex.** It's best to stay away from situations that can lead to sex when you don't feel ready. Drinking alcohol and using drugs may lead to you having sex when you don't mean to. It's never OK for someone to pressure you to have sex.

Where can I find more information?

Always feel free to share your concerns and questions with your pediatrician. If you'd like to do some reading on your own, you may want to contact one of the following sources:

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
www.acog.org

DuraMed Pharmaceuticals
800/330-1271
www.go2planB.com

Emergency Contraception Hot Line
888/NOT-2-LATE

Emergency Contraception Web Site
<http://ec.princeton.edu>

International Consortium for Emergency Contraception
www.cecinfo.org

Managing Contraception
www.managingcontraception.com

The National Women's Health Information Center
800/994-WOMAN (800/994-9662)
www.4woman.gov

Planned Parenthood
www.plannedparenthood.org

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From your doctor

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of Pediatrics



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