

The Emergency Contraceptive Pill: Facts

- Doesn't make it harder for you to get pregnant later on.
- Won't cause you harm if you use it more than once.
- Won't cause an abortion if you are already pregnant.

Remember: it's not as effective as other contraceptive methods, may have more side effects, doesn't protect you from sexually transmissible infections, and doesn't protect you from pregnancy for future sex, so it's unwise to use it as a regular method of contraception.

You can do something after sex to **prevent** pregnancy.

The Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP), used correctly, can prevent pregnancy **up to 72 hours** after sex, but the sooner you take it the better.

When can I use emergency contraception?

After you've had sex when:

- You've not used protection.
- Your normal contraception fails, e.g. condom splits.
- You've missed more than 1 birth control pill.
- You've been vomiting or had diarrhoea while on the pill.
- You've missed your injection (depo).
- You've been forced to have sex without contraception.

How does it work?

- It may stop or delay the release of an egg from your ovaries until the guy's sperm aren't active in your body anymore.
- Prevents the sperm from fertilising an egg by changing the way the sperm moves in your body.
- It doesn't work if you are already pregnant.
- It doesn't harm you or a developing embryo.

When can I take it?

You can take it up to 72 hours (3 days) after having unprotected sex

The sooner, the better.

How effective is it?

It's most effective taken within 12 hours of sex.

Within 24 hours it has only a 1% failure rate. On the third day, the failure rate rises to 2.5%.

Tell your doctor or pharmacist about any other medication you are taking.

If you vomit within 3 hours of taking it you'll need to get a new one.

An alternative method of emergency contraception is the IUD. It is fitted by a doctor up to 5 days after sex, and it's almost 100% effective.

Are there side effects?

A few women have mild side effects e.g. feel sick or vomit.

If you think you could be pregnant, have a pregnancy test 3-4 weeks after you use the ECP, or if you have not had a normal period within seven days of your next expected period.

Can I get it in advance?

Yes, you can buy it from a chemist or get it from a Family Planning clinic on prescription.

Having the pill handy means you can take it as soon as you realise there is a problem. **The sooner you take it, the better chance it works.**