



Emergency Contraception



What is it?

Birth control used AFTER intercourse to prevent pregnancy. It can be provided through oral medication or insertion of an IUD (intrauterine device).

Use of Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECP) is a safe and effective way of reducing the risk of pregnancy after unprotected sexual intercourse (condom failure, missed oral contraceptive (OC), or failure to use a contraceptive method, etc.) Formerly referred to as the "morning after pill."

What it is not?

It is not the abortion pill (RU486). ECP are not effective after pregnancy has occurred and cannot interrupt it.

How it works?

ECPs create a short strong burst of hormones which interfere with the normal hormone patterns of the menstrual cycle. They may prevent release of an egg from the ovary, disturb the lining of the uterus to prevent implantation in the uterus or interfere with the transportation of the egg or sperm through the fallopian tube.

Risk of Pregnancy?

The risk of becoming pregnant with any single act of intercourse can be as high as 30%. Pregnancy rates are less than 4% after use of emergency contraception.

If you are already pregnant before using ECP the existing pregnancy is unlikely to be affected. If ECP fails to prevent pregnancy there should be no effect on the pregnancy. Using ECP will not affect a woman's ability to become pregnant in the future.

Are there Contraindications?

There are very few contraindications to using ECP. These contraindications include existing pregnancy, undiagnosed vaginal bleeding, or allergy to the ingredients of the pills.

How is it used?

Two tablets of ECP are taken within 120 hours of unprotected intercourse.

It appears to be more effective if it is taken within 24 hours of unprotected intercourse.

What are the common side effects?

Common side effects can include: headache, fluid retention, breast tenderness, irregular bleeding, nausea, and mild abdominal pain. These subside within a few days.

Menstrual changes may occur during the cycle in which ECP are used. These include spotting and/or a period may be earlier or later than expected.

CONTACT HEALTH SERVICES OR YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER IF YOU:

1. Vomit within 2 hours of taking your dose of ECP (this is very unlikely). This dose must be repeated. There is medication available to help prevent vomiting.
2. Do not start menses within three weeks of taking ECP.
3. Have a **very** unusual period.

ECPs are intended as emergency contraception. If you have a need for ongoing contraception please discuss this with your medical provider. UNH Health Services provides annual women's health exams, pap smears, unlimited office visits (covered by your health fee). Contraceptive methods are available.

ECP is available directly through the UNH Health Services Pharmacy and most community pharmacies without a prescription. An ID is required and you must be 18 years of age.

**You can also make an appointment to see a Health Services health care provider if you have any additional questions or concerns
(603) 862-1094 to talk with a pharmacist
(603) 862-2856 to talk with a triage nurse**

If UNH Health Services is not open, ECP is available through area pharmacies.

It may be helpful to have a dose of ECP on hand. Your medical provider or pharmacist can provide ECP before it is needed.

References: Hatcher, Robert et al. Contraceptive Technology, 16th Revised Edition, New York, Irvington Publishers, 1994. Hatcher, Robert et al. Emergency Contraception The Nation's Best Kept Secret, Georgia, Bridging the Gap Publications, 1995. Hatcher, Robert. A Pocket Guide to Managing Contraception, 2002-2003.



HEALTH SERVICES

(603)862-2856 (during hours of operation)|(603) 862-1530 (after hours)

www.unh.edu/health-services

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