

Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECPs or Morning After Pills)

What are Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECPs)

Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECPs) are a way of preventing pregnancy after having unprotected sex. They are also commonly referred to as “morning after pills”. Unprotected sex means intercourse without birth control or intercourse with failed birth control (for example a broken or slipped condom, misplaced diaphragm, or forgotten oral contraceptive pills).

ECPs contain a hormone that is found in many birth control pills except in a different dosage.

The brand names of ECPs are Plan B, Next Choice, and Ella.

How do ECPs work?

Depending on when you use ECPs during your monthly cycle, the medication will either stop you from producing eggs, stop fertilization of an egg, or stop a fertilized egg from becoming attached to the lining of your uterus.

**NOTE: ECPs are not the same as RU-486, the "abortion pill".
RU-486 is used to cause an abortion of an already established pregnancy.**

How effective are ECPs?

ECPs prevent most pregnancies if they are used correctly within 120 hours (5 days) after unprotected sex. Treatment within 72 hours will reduce the risk of becoming pregnant from a single act of unprotected intercourse by 89%. ECPs are most effective when taken within 24 hours of intercourse; the sooner you take it after unprotected intercourse, the more effective they will be.

NOTE: ECPs should NOT be used as your main method of birth control because they are less effective than regular use of standard birth control methods.

ECPs do NOT protect you against sexually transmitted diseases.

Are ECPs right for me?

If you are certain that you do not want to be pregnant, and you recently had unprotected sex one or more times, and the first time was within the last 120 hours (5 days), ECPs may be a good choice for you.

If you are currently using a birth control method but want to have a back-up method available in case of a mistake (e.g. slipped condom, misplaced diaphragm, forgotten pills etc.), ask your healthcare provider to write you a prescription for an ECP kit that you can keep at home...just in case.

Even if you normally cannot take birth control pills, it is usually okay to take ECPs. Ask your healthcare provider.

What else do I need to know about ECPs?

ECPS MUST BE TAKEN SOON AFTER SEX. The first ECP dose should be taken within 120 hours (5days) of unprotected sex; however, it is most effective if taken as soon as possible after unprotected sex.

ECPS CAN CAUSE TEMPORARY SIDE EFFECTS. ECPs sometimes cause nausea, which may occasionally result in vomiting. These can usually be avoided by taking them with food and water. If necessary, this can be controlled with additional medication. Sometimes they can cause headaches, dizziness, cramping, or breast tenderness. Most women have no side effects after taking ECPs.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

ECPs CAN CAUSE YOUR PERIOD TO COME A FEW DAYS EARLY OR A FEW DAYS LATE. A pregnancy test is advised if your period is more than one week later than expected.

ECPs DO NOT PROTECT AGAINST HIV AND OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES LIKE SYPHILIS, GONORRHEA, CHLAMYDIA AND HERPES. If you are worried about whether you may have been infected with HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases, talk to your healthcare provider for advice.

If ECPs do not work and I become pregnant, could ECPs hurt the baby?

Available information suggests that there is no risk to the fetus if the treatment fails or is taken during an already established pregnancy.

Will taking ECPs prevent pregnancy in the future?

NO! If you have unprotected sex after using ECPs, they will not protect you from becoming pregnant. Use an effective birth control method regularly and correctly to prevent future pregnancy. If you want more information about birth control methods, or if you are having trouble using your regular method, ask your healthcare provider or the Health Promotion Department about methods that may work well for you.

REMEMBER: *ECPs should not be used as your main birth control method. It is better to use a more effective birth control method and/or a method that can protect you from HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.*

What can I expect after using ECPs

You will not see any signs right away indicating whether or not the ECPs worked. You may have spotting for several days after taking ECPs and your period may come a few days earlier or later than expected. If your period is more than one week later than expected, come to Student Health Services for a pregnancy test. If you have any cause for concern, make sure to contact your healthcare provider.

Where can I get ECPs

If you are a woman over 17, you can get ECPs at any local, community pharmacy without a prescription. You can also get ECPs at Student Health Services pharmacy for a lower rate than community pharmacies. You may also talk to your healthcare provider about getting an advanced prescription if you want to have an ECP kit as a back-up method.

Remember the good news about ECPs

- ECPs are easy to use and simple to take.
- ECPs can prevent unwanted pregnancy.
- ECPs are safe because the total hormone dosage is low.
- You usually do not need an exam to get ECPs.
- You can purchase an ECP kit to keep at home...just in case.

For More Information:

Student Health Services	619-594-5281	Visit Our Website at	shs.sdsu.edu
Health Promotion.	619-594-4133	Facebook/Twitter.	Facebook.com/aztechealth & @AZTEHealth
Emergency Contraception Hotline.	1-888-NOT-2-LATE		