

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION (EC)

Planned Parenthood Northern California 1-925-676-0300

What is EC?

Emergency contraception can prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex. It is also known as emergency birth control, backup birth control or the morning-after pill. EC should be used as soon as possible up to 5 days after unprotected sex.

There are two types of EC:

- Copper Intrauterine Contraceptive (Copper IUC) – a small, T-shaped piece of plastic containing copper that is put into the uterus. The Copper IUC can also be used for continued birth control.
- EC pills – one type of EC pill is made of ulipristal acetate (UPA). Another type of EC pill is made of one of the female hormones – progestin (Progestin EC).

How well does EC work?

The Copper IUC is the most effective method – it reduces the risk of pregnancy by more than 99 percent if it's put in within 5 days of unprotected sex.

UPA reduces the risk of pregnancy up to 85 percent and works just as well on any day you take it up to 5 days after unprotected sex. But if you are overweight, it may not work as well.

Progestin EC reduces the risk of pregnancy by 75-89 percent if you take it within the first 3 days after sex. It is less effective the more time that passes and may not work 4 or 5 days after sex. Also, if you are overweight, it may not work as well.

How does EC work?

The Copper IUC works mainly by affecting the way sperm move so they can't join with an egg.

Both types of EC pills work by keeping the ovaries from releasing eggs (ovulation).

Pregnancy cannot happen if egg and sperm don't meet.

When should I use EC?

Take it as soon as possible. Use EC every time you have unprotected sex.

You can ask for EC when you need it, or you can get EC pills before. Getting it before will let you take it as soon as possible if you ever need it.

How do I decide which type of EC is best for me?

Some things to think about are

- Whether you want the most effective EC – the Copper IUC is best if you also want a highly effective method of birth control – the Copper IUC may be left in place to use for birth control for up to 12 years
- When you had unprotected sex
 - The Copper IUC is best and can work for up to 5 days after unprotected sex. UPA is the next best and can work for up to 5 days.
 - Progestin EC will work best in the first 3 days.

- Your weight
 - The Copper IUC is the best choice no matter how much you weigh.
 - UPA is the next best option if you are overweight.
 - Progestin EC may not work as well if you are overweight.
- If you are breastfeeding
 - The Copper IUC and Progestin EC are safe.
 - Use UPA only if you are willing to pump and throw away your milk for 24 hours.
- The kind of birth control you use or that you'd like to start. Your doctor or nurse can help you decide.

What are the side effects of EC pills?

Possible side effects go away quickly. They include

- Dizziness, headaches, breast tenderness
- Nausea
- Belly pain or period cramps
- Bleeding between periods

EC pills can affect your next period. It could be early or late, lighter or heavier, or shorter or longer. Or it could be the same as usual.

EC pills will not end a pregnancy. Don't use it if you are already pregnant. If you're not sure, you may want to have a pregnancy test but even if you are pregnant, or if you become pregnant after taking EC pills, there is no proof that it will harm the pregnancy.

What are my other choices?

You can choose to wait and see if you become pregnant. We are happy to discuss all your options with you.

What else do I need to know?

We are happy to talk with you about your birth control choices if you do not want to become pregnant right now.

Read the package insert that comes with your pill(s). The information may be different from ours. Let us know if you have questions.

Some people feel sick to their stomachs after taking EC pills. If you are concerned about that

- Do not take the pills on an empty stomach.
- Take over-the-counter nausea medicine about an hour before the EC pills.

Instructions for using EC pills**Progestin EC pills**

1. You have been given EC named **EContra EZ, EContra One-Step or Next Choice**.
2. You should swallow one pill as soon as possible within 5 days (120 hours) after unprotected intercourse. The sooner you take it, the better it works to prevent pregnancy
3. If you are starting hormonal birth control you will need to use a back-up method (like condoms) for the first seven (7) days you're taking your birth control.

Ulipristal Acetate EC pills

1. You have been given EC named **Ella**
2. You should swallow one pill
 - as soon as possible within 5 days (120 hours) after unprotected intercourse. The sooner you take it, the better it works to prevent pregnancy
 - in ___ days (on ___/___/___)
3. If you are starting hormonal birthcontrol method, start it in ___ days (on ___/___/___)
4. If you are starting hormonal birth control you will need to use a back-up method (like condoms) for the first seven (7) days you're taking your birth control.

Your health is important to us. If you have any questions or concerns, please call us. We are happy to help you.