

Emergency Contraception (EC)/Morning-after Pill (MAP)

What is emergency contraception?

Emergency contraception's purpose is to prevent pregnancy after a woman has had unprotected sex.

When should it be used?

Emergency Contraception is made to use anytime a woman has intercourse without using birth control or if there is a birth control failure. Taking it as early as possible after the incident increases its effectiveness.

Plan B One-Step and Next Choice is made to be taken within 72 hours of the unprotected incident. Ella can be used up to 120 hours.

Does EC contain hormones?

Yes, morning-after pills contain either levonorgestrel (Plan B One-Step, Next Choice) or ulipristal (Ella). These are progestin-type hormones similar to what is found in birth control pills.

How effective is EC?

If you take Plan B One-Step within 24 hours, it is about 95% effective. If you take Plan B One-Step or Ella within 72 hours after you've had unprotected sex, they reduce the risk of pregnancy by up to 89%. The effectiveness of Ella extends to 5 days. All ECs are only effective for one episode of unprotected sex.

How does the EC work?

Morning-after pills do not end a pregnancy that has implanted. Depending on where you are in your menstrual cycle, morning-after pills act like birth control methods by one or more of the following actions: delaying or preventing ovulation, blocking fertilization, or keeping a fertilized egg from implanting in the uterus. Recent evidence strongly suggests that Plan B One-Step and Next Choice do not inhibit implantation. It's not clear if the same is true for Ella.

Is EC the same as the abortion pill?

The morning-after pill is not the same as mifepristone (Mifeprex), also known as RU-486 or the abortion pill. Mifeprex terminates an established pregnancy — one in which the fertilized egg has attached to the uterine wall and has already begun to develop.

Does the EC prevent STDs?

EC does not protect against HIV or STDs.

Who should use the EC?

Women who:

- Didn't use any birth control
- Had a condom come off or break
- Had the diaphragm slip out of place
- Missed at least two or three active birth control pills in a row
- Forgot to insert their ring
- Have any reason to think their birth control might not have worked
- Were forced to have sex

Who should not use the EC?

Women who:

- Know they are pregnant or suspect they might be
- Have a clotting disorder or have had blood clots
- Have a history of allergy or hypersensitivity to any ingredients
- Have a history of recent abnormal vaginal bleeding that has not been evaluated.

Is EC available at SHC?

Yes, Plan B is available at a very reasonable cost. No prescription is needed. Go straight to the pharmacy.

A prescription for Ella may be obtained by making an appointment in the Women's Clinic. Ella is not available at SHC pharmacy.