Emergency Contraception

- Emergency contraception (EC), previously known as the "Morning-After Pill", are hormone pills taken within 3 days or 72 hours after unprotected intercourse to prevent pregnancy. EC can reduce your chance of getting pregnant by approximately 89% if taken in the first 72 hours and is somewhat less effective if taken between 72 and 120 hours (3-5 days) after the unprotected event.

- ECs can prevent pregnancy by temporarily stopping ovulation (the release of eggs). They also may stop fertilization (the joining of an egg and sperm), or stop implantation (the attachment of a fertilized egg to the uterine wall).

- ECs will not work if you are already pregnant. ECs have not been known to increase the risk of fetal abnormalities or miscarriage.

- If your previous menstrual cycle was unusual, or you suspect that you may already be pregnant, a pregnancy test is advised prior to taking EC. If your pregnancy test is negative, it is ok to take EC. If your pregnancy test is positive, do not take EC. Call the Clinic Nurse Advice Line at 643-7197.

The following symptoms or side-effects may occur in women who take Emergency Contraception:

- Nausea, and occasionally, vomiting. Nausea is usually worse when the stomach is empty. Try eating small amounts of food at frequent intervals. For example, eat a cracker or light snack every 1 or 2 hours. If vomiting occurs within 1 to 2 hours after taking the tablets, please call the clinic for advice. It is possible that you may not have absorbed enough of the hormone to protect you against pregnancy. You may pre-treat for nausea with Dramamine®, Bonine® (Meclizine Hydrochloride) or Benadryl ® (Diphenhydramine). These medications are available without a prescription. They may cause drowsiness.

- Breast tenderness. This may be uncomfortable but will go away when you start your period. A well-fitting bra and Tylenol may be helpful.

- You should have a period within 2-4 weeks after taking EC. Sometimes EC can make your period a week earlier or later than usual. If you do not have period within 3 weeks, take a pregnancy test.

Check our website: [www.uhs.berkeley.edu](http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu) to learn more about this medical concern or others. For an appointment [www.uhs.berkeley.edu](http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu) or call 510-642-2000 Clinic Nurse 510-643-7197 for advice.
Emergency Contraception (continued)

- Take EC as soon as possible after unprotected intercourse, but not more than 5 days after.

- Emergency contraception is not intended to be used as a substitute for contraception. It is not as effective as regular birth control methods.

- If you use a barrier method, keep a dose of EC on hand. Remember it is advised that you start EC as soon as possible or within 120 hours (5 days) of a contraceptive failure.

- Unprotected intercourse can result in sexually transmitted diseases. Schedule an appointment for screening tests for sexually transmitted diseases 1 to 2 weeks after possible exposure, or sooner if you have unusual symptoms.

- Though serious side effects such as blood clotting, stroke, hypertension or heart attack have on rare occasions been associated with the longer-term use of oral contraceptives, complications have not been reported with the use of EC.

- Read the package insert for instructions specific to your EC medication

For more information about EC or contraception, good websites include www.ec.princeton.edu, www.plannedparenthood.org and www.womenshealth.gov