

Emergency Contraception

Emergency contraception (EC) are methods used by people to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex. EC does not cause an abortion and will not stop a pregnancy that is already established.

Below are the different types of emergency contraception listed from **most to least effective**:

- **PARAGARD (the copper IUD) and MIRENA (the hormonal IUD)** are greater than **99% effective** when inserted within 5 days of unprotected intercourse. Either of these are excellent methods especially for people who desire long term reversible contraception and have no contraindications. **Contact the Advice Nurse immediately (510-643-7197)** if interested so this process can be expedited.

- **EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION PILLS (ECP)** are pills taken within five days of unprotected intercourse. ECP are **approximately 89% effective** if taken within 72 hours and can be somewhat less effective if taken from 72-120 hours depending on the regimen used. ECP are listed below:
 - **ELLA** (ulipristal acetate) requires a prescription and is covered by SHIP. You can request a prescription from the Advice Nurse at Tang during normal business hours or in person from the Urgent Care Triage Nurse.
 1. Should be taken orally as soon as possible up to 5 days after unprotected sex. Most effective ECP because of its higher efficacy when taken beyond 3 days after unprotected intercourse (3-5 days).
 2. More effective for overweight people than other types of ECP.
 3. If you are breast-feeding and plan to take Ella, you should pump and discard breast milk for 24 hours after taking it.
 4. **Because hormonal contraception (pills, patches, rings, etc.) can decrease the effectiveness of Ella and vice versa, wait to start/restart your birth control until 5 days after taking Ella. Use a backup method like condoms for 7 days after initiating your hormonal birth control.**

 - **PLAN B One Step, EZCONTRA, or NEXT CHOICE** (Levonorgestrel 1.5 mg) should be taken orally as soon as possible up to 5 days after unprotected intercourse.
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 2. Plan B may be less effective in people with a BMI of 30 or above.
 3. Available by request without a prescription at the Tang Center pharmacy and most community pharmacies
 4. Not covered by SHIP, available over-the-counter and at the Tang pharmacy

You may experience symptoms or side effects with ECP. These include:

Emergency Contraception (continued)

Nausea/Vomiting. Try taking your ECP with food. While anti-nausea medication is not normally needed, you can pre-treat with over-the-counter Dramamine, Meclizine or Benadryl per package directions. These medications can cause drowsiness. **If vomiting occurs within 3 hours of taking EC, you will need to repeat the dose.**

Breast tenderness. This may be uncomfortable but will go away when you start your period. You can use Tylenol or Ibuprofen as directed if this is bothersome.

- You should have a period within 2-4 weeks of taking ECP. Your period may come earlier or later than usual. Consider taking a pregnancy test 2-3 weeks after using EC. This is especially important if you have not had a menstrual period by this time. For information on pregnancy testing at Tang see: <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/medical/primary-care/womens-health/pregnancy-options/pregnancy-testing-tang>.

Unprotected sex can put you at risk for sexually transmitted diseases. Schedule an appointment or order self-directed testing on-line (uhs.berkeley.edu search "STI Testing") 1-2 weeks after possible exposure, sooner if you are having unusual symptoms.

Concurrent use of some drugs may reduce ECP efficacy. However, the ECP regimen is the same whether or not you are using these drugs.

While ECP does not appear to be harmful if inadvertently taken while pregnant, if you suspect you are pregnant, get a pregnancy test before considering taking ECP. Remember, ECP will not work if you are already pregnant.

EC use can serve as a great reminder that you may want to consider a more effective method of birth control. Tang offers a full array of birth control options. You can call 510-642-2000 or visit www.uhs.berkeley.edu.

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

Check our **Website:** uhs.berkeley.edu to learn more about this and other medical concerns.
For **Appointments:** etang.berkeley.edu or call 510-642-2000 For **Advice:** call 510-643-7197