

Emergency Contraception

Emergency contraception (EC) are methods used by women to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex. These methods have varying degrees of effectiveness depending on which method is used and timing of use. EC does not cause an abortion and will not stop a pregnancy that is already established. Below you will find three types of emergency contraception listed from **most to least effective**:

PARAGARD IUD (Copper IUD) if inserted within 5 days of unprotected intercourse is **greater than 99% effective**. This is an excellent method especially for women who desire long term reversible contraception and have no contraindications. Contact the Advice Nurse (510-643-7197) immediately 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** in reducing your risk of pregnancy if taken within 72 hours and can be somewhat less effective if taken from 72-120 hours depending on the regimen used. There are three different types of ECP:

- **ELLA** (ulipristal acetate) is available by prescription only and is covered by SHIP. You can request a prescription from the Advice Nurse at Tang without an appointment. Ella has been shown to be more effective overall than other ECP because of its higher efficacy when taken beyond 3 days after unprotected intercourse (3-5 days). It also appears to be more effective for overweight women than other types of ECP. You should not take Ella if you are breast-feeding. **BECAUSE HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION (PILLS, PATCHES, RINGS, ETC.) CAN DECREASE THE EFFICACY OF ELLA AND VICE VERSA, WAIT TO START/RESTART YOUR HORMONAL BIRTH CONTROL UNTIL 5 DAYS AFTER TAKING ELLA. YOU WILL NEED A BACK-UP METHOD UNTIL 7 DAYS AFTER INITIATING YOUR HORMONAL BIRTH CONTROL.**
- **PLAN B One Step** is 1 pill of progestin-only (no estrogen) hormone. It should be taken orally as soon as possible up to 5 days after unprotected intercourse. Plan B may be less effective in women with a BMI of 30 or above. It is available by request without a prescription at the Tang Center pharmacy and most community pharmacies.
- **EZCONTRA/NEXT CHOICE** are generic versions of progestin only EC. The package may contain either a single tablet (1.5 mg levonorgestrel) or 2 tablets (0.75 mg levonorgestrel each). If your package contains two pills, it is recommended that you take them both at the same time rather than 12 hours apart as the package indicates because studies suggest it is more effective the sooner the medication is taken. These are not covered by SHIP but are available over-the-counter at the Tang pharmacy for about \$20.

To find brands of contraceptive pills that can be used as emergency contraception see:
<http://ec.princeton.edu/questions/dose.html#dose>

Emergency Contraception (continued)

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

- 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 510-642-200 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