

Emergency contraception

Emergency contraception is a way to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex, or after regular birth control (contraception) has failed (for example, if a condom breaks or you miss a dose of your birth control pill). They do not end existing pregnancies or prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) but will prevent you from getting pregnant when used up to five days after sex.

Types of emergency contraception

- **Emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs)** are often called “morning-after pills.” They do not end existing pregnancies or prevent future pregnancies. ECPs may cause side effects like stomach pain, headaches, and nausea and vomiting. ECPs shouldn’t be used as a regular birth control. Three different types of ECPs are available in the United States today. All emergency contraceptive options are covered with a prescription from your doctor. Many are also available over the counter at a pharmacy if you do not have a prescription from your doctor.
- **Levonorgestrel** is a progestin pill that should be taken within three days (72 hours) of unprotected sex. This pill is about 87% effective.
- **Ulipristal acetate** is a progestin pill that should be taken within five days (120 hours). This pill is about 93% effective.
- **A combined regimen** is a system of two doses. The pills contain both estrogen and progestin. You take the first within three days (72 hours) of unprotected sex, and the second dose 12 hours later. This method is about 75% effective.
- **The copper intrauterine device (IUD)** is T-shaped device that your doctor places in your uterus. The copper IUD can prevent a pregnancy up to 5 days (120 hours) after unprotected sex or birth control failure. Copper kills sperm before they can fertilize an egg. It will not end an existing pregnancy. After it’s inserted, it lasts for up to 10 years. It does not release any hormones into your body.
- The copper IUD is the most effective form of emergency contraception. As emergency contraception, it’s 99.9% effective—that means it only fails for one out of every 1,000 women. Over 10 years, it’s 99.2% effective.

Questions to ask yourself

1. How will I protect myself from STIs?
2. Do I have access to a pharmacy that carries ECPs?

Questions to ask your doctor

1. How quickly could I get an appointment for a copper IUD after unprotected sex?
2. Will my weight affect how well this ECP will work?
3. Can we make a plan to get me on regular birth control?

For more helpful information on family planning:

- [Office on Women's Health](#)
- [Medline Plus](#)
- [National Institutes of Health](#)
- [Office of Adolescent Health](#)

If you want emergency contraception, you must get it very quickly. Make a plan now so you have less to worry about when you need it. Amerigroup Washington can help you make an appointment when you need one. You can call Member Services at 1-800-600-4441 (TTY 711) Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific time. To speak to a nurse or doctor 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, call the 24-hour Nurse HelpLine at 1-866-864-2544 (TTY 711) for English or 1-866-864-2545 (TTY 711) for Spanish.

For members who don't speak English, or are deaf or hard of hearing, we offer free oral interpretation services for all languages as well as auxiliary aids to assist you. To get these services, call Amerigroup Member Services at 1-800-600-4441 (TTY 711) Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific time.

Sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Contraception

<https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/contraception/index.htm>, accessed August 14, 2018

World Health Organization
Family Planning

<http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/fp-global-handbook/en/>, accessed August 14, 2018

National Institutes of Health
What are the different types of contraception?

<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/contraception/conditioninfo/types>, accessed August 14, 2018

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Population Affairs
Emergency Contraception

<https://www.hhs.gov/opa/pregnancy-prevention/birth-control-methods/emergency-contraception/index.html>, accessed August 16, 2018