

How it works

Emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs) are hormone pills that you take *after* having unprotected sex, usually within the first 72 hours (3 days). They contain two doses of a hormone (progestin) commonly used in birth control pills.

ECPs work to prevent pregnancy by stopping your ovaries from releasing an egg, keeping sperm away from the egg, or preventing a fertilized egg from attaching to the inside of the uterus.

ECPs are used in an emergency only, so it's important that you have a regular method of birth control. Here are some examples of when or why you might use ECPs:

- You had sex unexpectedly or were forced to have sex and no birth control was used.
- A condom broke, slipped or came off.
- You forgot to take several birth control pills.

Benefits

ECPs can prevent unwanted pregnancies after unprotected sex. Breast-feeding women and others who can't use birth control pills that contain the hormone estrogen may still be able to use them.

Effectiveness varies depending on how much time goes by between having unprotected sex and using ECPs. They are as much as 95% effective when taken within the first 24 hours. This goes down to 85% in the second 24 hours and less after that, so it is important to get ECPs as soon as possible after unprotected sex.

ECPs are not effective if you had unprotected sex earlier in your cycle or if you are already pregnant. They will *not* protect you from pregnancy in the days or weeks *after* treatment.

Side effects

After using ECPs, your next period may be late. You may also have spotting (light bleeding), nausea, abdominal pain, tiredness or a headache.

ECPs should not be used for women who are already pregnant because they will not work. It is unlikely that ECPs would have any effect on a pregnancy already in place.

However, if you do become pregnant despite taking ECPs, there may be a higher risk of a tubal pregnancy. (A tubal pregnancy is one where the fertilized egg begins to grow in the tube, rather than the uterus.)

Getting started

As soon as possible after unprotected sex, take both of the hormone pills with a large glass of water.

Things to know

The sooner ECPs are taken, the better they work.

You are *not* protected from pregnancy if you have unprotected sex *after* using ECPs.

ECPs are not as effective as other, regular methods of birth control pills, shots, condoms and spermicides.

You will probably get your next period within a week of when it would normally come. If you do not get a period within three weeks, see your health care provider.

Minneapolis School Based Clinics

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Henry: Room 212	612-668-1944
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Minneapolis School Based Clinics is a program of the



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Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECP)

If you need this material in an alternative format please call Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support at 612-673-2301 or email

health.familysupport@minneapolismn.gov.

Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons may use a relay service to call 311 agents at 612-673-3000. TTY users may call 612-673-2157 or 612-673-2626.

Attention: If you have any questions regarding this material please call Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support 612-673-2301.

Hmong - Ceeb toom. Yog koj xav tau kev pab txhais cov xov no rau koj dawb, hu 612-673-2800; Spanish - Atención.

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