

Emergency Contraception (Levonorgestrel)

Emergency contraception is a method of birth control that is used after intercourse. It may be called EC or the “morning after pill”.

The most common method of EC is Levonorgestrel (“Plan B”, Norlevo®, Next Choice®).

You will need to take 2 pills right away. These pills must be taken as soon as possible after unprotected intercourse.

How is emergency contraception used?

EC is used to prevent pregnancy from a SINGLE act of unprotected intercourse. For example; no birth control used or birth control failed (condom broke or missed birth control pills).

EC does not protect you from becoming pregnant if you have unprotected sexual intercourse again during the same menstrual cycle.

There is a very slight chance that you could still be pregnant even if you take EC. There is no evidence that EC will cause birth defects and hormonal EC does not cause an abortion.

If a pregnancy occurs after taking EC, you will need to consider your options. You may choose to continue the pregnancy or have an abortion. Discuss this with your doctor.

Who can take EC?

EC is safer than traditional birth control and can be used by almost all (99.6%) of women.

Who should NOT take EC?

If you have any of the following you should not take EC:

- you are already pregnant
- an allergy to the medication
- severe liver disease or cirrhosis
- progesterone-receptor-positive breast cancer

What are the possible side effects of EC?

Side effects are very rare and much less than older methods of EC.

It is possible to have:

- nausea and/or vomiting
- bleeding or spotting from your vagina

To prevent feeling sick to your stomach, try eating some food before taking EC.

If you vomit within one hour of taking EC, you may need to get another set of pills. Call the doctor if this happens.

When will I get my next period?

You may have some spotting or bleeding shortly after taking EC. This is not your period.

Expect to get your period around the same time it usually comes. It may be slightly early or slightly late.

If you do not have a period within 3 weeks, you should have a pregnancy test and see your doctor or health care provider to discuss your options.

Do I need other tests?

Unprotected intercourse can put you at risk for sexually transmitted infections (STI). Talk with your doctor about STI screening.

Emergency contraception is available without a prescription at any pharmacy.

Questions?

If you have questions about EC, call your family doctor or speak with the pharmacist at your local pharmacy.