



NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.™

Helping Hand™

Health Education for Patients and Families

Birth Control: Emergency Contraception (EC)

Emergency contraception (EC) is birth control that keeps you from getting pregnant after unprotected or inadequately protected sex (Picture 1).

It comes in two forms: an **intrauterine device (IUD)** or a **pill** (sometimes known as “The Morning After Pill”).

- **There are two IUD versions of EC:** the copper IUD (Paragard®) or a hormonal IUD (Mirena® or Liletta®). These are the most effective form of EC. They work by keeping sperm from fertilizing the egg.
- **There are two pill versions of EC:** ulipristal acetate (Ella®) and levonorgestrel (Plan B®, Next Choice®). The pills work by keeping the ovary from releasing an egg (ovulation). Ella® is the most effective EC pill.

Advantages of EC

- EC can prevent pregnancy for up to 5 days after unprotected sex. However, it works best in the first 24 hours.
- The pills are available as a one-dose option.
- Plan B® is available over-the-counter at pharmacies without a prescription.
- The IUD provides ongoing birth control for 6 to 10 years depending on the type.

Disadvantages of EC

- The IUD is put into place by a trained health care provider in an office.
- Ella® should not be used at the same time as hormonal birth control.



Picture 1 Emergency contraception tablet

- You must have a prescription to get Ella®.
- The pill forms are not recommended as long-term birth control.

How to use it

- Start EC as soon as you can after unprotected or inadequately protected sex.
- EC users should consider starting a regular form of birth control.
- You can start your regular birth control the same day you use Plan B® or Next Choice®. Delay using hormonal birth control until 5 days after using Ella®.

You should have a pregnancy test if you have not had a period within 3 weeks of using EC.

Side effects

- **Possible side effects of the pill:** nausea, headache, and irregular bleeding
- **Possible side effects of an IUD:** irregular bleeding and cramping

When to call the health care provider

Call the doctor or health care provider if you:

- think you are pregnant.
- think you might have a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

When to go to the emergency room

Go straight to the emergency room if you have any of the following symptoms:

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| • irregular bleeding that will not go away | • sudden change in vision |
| • lower belly pain that will not go away | • very bad headache |
| • unusual pain in your chest | • trouble breathing or speaking |
| • weakness or numbness | • unusual pain or swelling in the legs |

Preventing STIs

Emergency contraception does not protect against (STIs). Condoms are the best way for sexually active people to reduce the risk of infection. Always use a condom when you have sex. Get yearly health check-ups, including testing for STIs.