

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

ORAL EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION (Oral EC)

Emergency contraception is a safe and effective way of preventing pregnancy. It can be used after unprotected sex without contraception, if a condom breaks or slips, following a missed pill, or after sexual assault. Oral EC is also called the 'morning after pill'. To be effective it should be taken as soon as possible after the unprotected sex.

When should I take Emergency Contraception and how does it work?

Oral EC works by preventing or delaying ovulation (release of an egg from the ovaries). It will not work if you are already pregnant. When taken within 72 hours (3 days) after sex oral EC prevents most pregnancies. It can still be taken up to 120 hours (5 days) after sex; however it may not be as effective.

Is Emergency Contraception safe and are there any side effects?

Oral EC can be safely taken by women of any age. If you are already pregnant oral EC will not harm you or affect your pregnancy. Side effects can include either a delay or early arrival of your next period. Less commonly it may cause headache, dizziness, nausea and vomiting. If you vomit within 2 hours of taking oral EC a repeat dose should be taken.

Is it safe to take Emergency Contraception when breastfeeding?

Yes – oral EC is safe to use when breastfeeding. It will not decrease your milk supply. A tiny amount of progestogen may come through the breast milk but there is no evidence that this will affect your baby.

Will Emergency Contraception still work if I take other medications?

Oral EC will still work if taken with most medications. Liver enzyme-inducing drugs can reduce the effectiveness of oral EC and you may need to take extra tablets. Discuss this with your healthcare provider.

Can I use Emergency Contraception because I have missed my usual contraceptive pills?

Yes. If you have missed some of your regular contraceptive pills, oral EC can be used in addition to your regular pills. After you have taken oral EC, continue to take your pills as usual. You will need to use condoms until you have taken 7 days of your regular contraceptive pills in a row.

Will I need a pregnancy test after taking Emergency Contraception?

Most women will have a normal period within 7 days of the expected time. If your next period is late, or different to usual e.g. heavier, lighter or more painful, then you should have a pregnancy test.

Does Emergency Contraception cause an abortion or affect my fertility?

No, oral EC prevents pregnancy from occurring - it does not disrupt an established pregnancy. Oral EC will not affect your fertility.

Can I use Emergency Contraception more than once?

If further unprotected sex occurs oral EC can be taken more than once, even in the same menstrual cycle. You will need to discuss whether you should take oral EC again in the same menstrual cycle with your health care provider.

What should I do after I take Emergency Contraception?

- use condoms until you are covered by another regular method of contraception. Taking oral EC will not offer you protection against pregnancy if you have unprotected sex again in the same menstrual cycle
- get checked for sexually transmitted infections.

What if I have missed the timeframe?

If you have missed the time frame for oral EC and are concerned you may be pregnant, do a pregnancy test if you do not get your period at the expected time. Pregnancy tests can be purchased from supermarkets and pharmacies, or testing can be done at any of the services listed overleaf.

Where can I get Emergency Contraception in Canberra?

Pharmacies

Oral EC can be obtained without a prescription at most pharmacies. Before you can be given the oral EC, you will be asked a few questions to assess your risk of pregnancy and your medical history. To find a pharmacy in your area visit www.pharmacies.com.au

Walk-in Centres

Oral EC is available free of charge from both the ACT Health nurse-led Walk-in Centres:

Belconnen Walk-in Centre

Belconnen Community Health Centre, corner Lathlain and Cohen Streets, Belconnen

Open 7:30am -10pm everyday

Tuggeranong Walk-in Centre

Tuggeranong Community Health Centre, corner Anketell and Pitman Streets, Tuggeranong

Open 7:30am -10pm everyday

Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT

Level 1, 28 University Avenue

Canberra City

Ph: (02) 6247 3077

The Junction Youth Health Service (for 12-25 year olds)

Corner of Cooyong St and Scotts Crossing

Canberra City

Ph: (02) 6232 2423

Canberra Sexual Health Centre

Building 5, Level 1, North Wing

Yamba Drive Garran

Ph: (02) 6244 2184

* Emergency contraception is not available at Calvary Hospital

Useful websites:

http://www.fpnsw.org.au/422437_8.html

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs244/en/>

To access information about emergency contraception in other languages:

<http://www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au/search>

References:

Sexual Health and Family Planning Australia (2013). Emergency Contraception Factsheet

<http://www.shfpa.org.au/>

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (2012) Emergency Contraception Clinical Guidance. [//www.fsrh.org/pdfs/CEUguidanceEmergencyContraception11.pdf](http://www.fsrh.org/pdfs/CEUguidanceEmergencyContraception11.pdf)

This fact sheet is designed to provide you with general information only. It is not intended to replace the need for a consultation with a health practitioner. All clients are advised to enquire about any specific questions or concerns they may have. Every effort has been made to ensure that this information is correct at the time of publishing.