

How to use emergency contraception

Information for patients

If you had sex without birth control or your birth control method failed within the past five days, you can use emergency contraception (EC) to reduce your risk of pregnancy. If you had unprotected sex without birth control more than five days ago, you should talk to your physician as soon as possible; you may be able to have an intrauterine device (IUD) inserted to avoid pregnancy.

Number of tablets and timing of doses

If you are taking:	Number of tablets to take as soon as possible (first dose)	Number of tablet to take about 12 hours later (second dose)
Plan B®	Two tablets	0 tablets
*Ovral®	Two tablets	Two tablets
*Alesse®	Five tablets	Five tablets
*Min-Ovral®	Four tablets	Four tablets
*Triphasil®	Four tablets (yellow only)	Four tablets (yellow only)
*Triquilar®	Four tablets	Four tablets

Take the first EC dose as soon as possible within five days of unprotected sex. The first dose should not be delayed. EC is more efficient at preventing pregnancy the earlier the first dose is taken. For PlanB®, package instructions recommend one tablet followed by a second in 12 hours, but it is just as effective when both tablets are taken as soon as possible.

*Gravol® may be taken one hour prior to each dose.

Important: Do not take extra EC tablets. Taking more will not make the method work better and will increase the chance you will feel sick to your stomach.

What to expect

Some women who use EC feel sick to their stomach, and a few women vomit. Some also feel dizzy, tired, or have tender breasts. The side effects are not serious and usually stop in a day or so. If you vomit within one hour of taking the tablets, call your physician. Your period may begin on time or a few days early or late.

Important: EC is not 100 per cent effective: talk to your physician if you think you may be pregnant following EC use.

Preventing future pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases

EC does not protect against pregnancy after treatment. Use condoms, spermicides, or a diaphragm after taking EC until your next period. You can then switch to a different birth control method if necessary.

EC is meant for emergency protection. EC is not as effective as other forms of regular birth control. Talk to your health-care provider about other regular birth control methods you can use to prevent pregnancy in the future.

EC also doesn't prevent sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs). Protect yourself against AIDS and other STDs as well as pregnancy – use condoms every time you have sex if you think you may be at risk.