

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILL (ECP)

The Emergency Contraceptive Pill is used to prevent pregnancy after a birth control method has failed or was not used. The ECP reduces your chances of getting pregnant. It should only be used as an emergency back-up method of birth control. It will not stop a pregnancy that has started from an earlier sexual act and will not protect you from pregnancy if you have sex after you take it.

HOW DO THESE PILLS WORK?

The ECP contains a hormone (progesterone) that may stop an egg from being released from the ovary or may prevent the egg from being fertilized. If an egg has been fertilized, these hormones may affect the lining of the uterus so that the egg will not implant and develop into a pregnancy.

WHEN SHOULD I USE THE ECP?

ECPs are most effective if taken within 72 hours after unprotected intercourse. **The sooner you take the pills the more effective they are. However, you can take ECP up to 120 hours after the unprotected act.**

IS THE ECP SAFE? WHAT ABOUT SIDE EFFECTS?

Yes, the ECP is safe and can be used by almost any woman who needs it. There is no evidence that it will harm a pregnancy that is already there. Possible side effects include: nausea, vomiting, headache, bloating, spotting, cramping, fatigue and dizziness.

Plan B – take 2 pills at once

Time lapse after unprotected intercourse	Effectiveness of Plan B
within the first 72 Hours	≥ 75%
72 – 120 Hours	< 58%
Side effects	Incidence with Plan B
Nausea	23%
Vomiting	6%

WHAT SHOULD I DO UNTIL MY NEXT PERIOD?

Your next period may be earlier or later than usual, and it might be lighter or heavier. If your next period is more than one week late, you should have a pregnancy test.

REMEMBER:

- ECPs only cut your risk of pregnancy from this one time act. **Any further acts of vaginal intercourse require protection against pregnancy**
- The ECP should not be used as a routine form of birth control as it is not as effective
- These pills do not protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Unprotected intercourse puts you at risk for infection. You should be tested in 2 weeks for STIs if you are at risk (i.e. you have a new partner)

BACK-UP ECP

If you use barrier or fertility awareness methods of birth control, you may want to have a back-up ECP package to keep on hand in case you need it.

If you have back-up ECPs, always check the expiry date on the package. Do not take them if the expiry date has passed.

PLEASE NOTE:

- If you are taking St. John's Wort, please note that it may reduce the effectiveness of the ECP
- If more than 5 days but less than 7 days have passed since the unprotected act of vaginal intercourse, please speak to a BCBC staff person about other options

If you have any questions please call the Bay Centre for Birth Control at 416-351-3700