

frequently asked questions about emergency contraception

EC. Plan B. The “morning after pill.”

Things don't always go according to plan. No matter your reason for learning more about emergency contraception, we hope you'll find some answers here.

Contents

Types, Access, & Cost

What kind of emergency contraception methods are there?	2
How much will it cost? Where can I get it?	3
Can minors get EC without adult permission?	4

What to Expect

What exactly does “unprotected sex” mean?	5
How effective is EC?	5
What are the side effects of EC?	6
Will Plan B still work if I vomit after taking it?	6
What could make EC less effective?	6
Are there medications that can interact with EC in a bad way?	7

EC Pills: Fast Facts

Fact: Taking EC pills frequently won't make them less effective.....	7
Fact: Using EC pills will not affect your fertility in the long-term.....	7
Why is using primary birth control still a good idea?.....	8

References	9
-------------------------	---



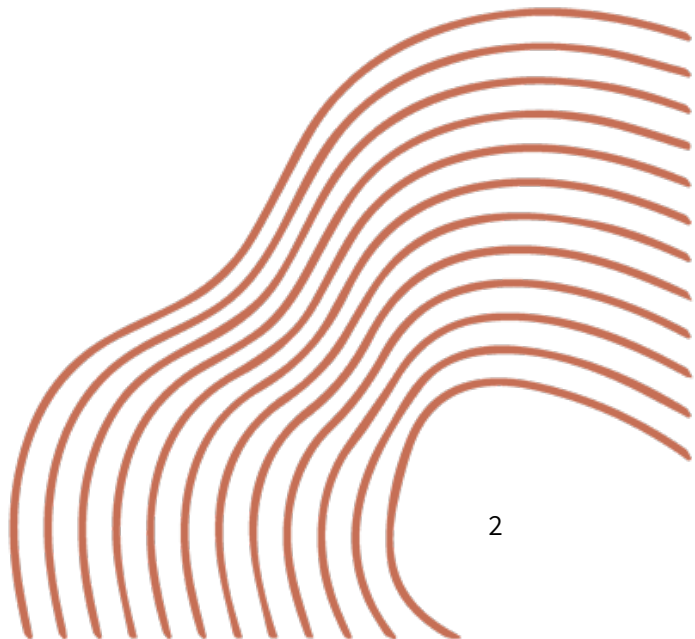
Types, Access, & Cost

What kind of emergency contraception methods are there?

There are 4 types of safe and effective emergency contraception (EC)^{1,2}:

1. **Plan B One-Step, Next Choice One Dose, EContra EZ, My Way, and After Pill** are brand names for **levonorgestrel-based** pills. You don't need a prescription for them, and they are the easiest emergency contraceptives to get. They delay ovulation and can prevent pregnancy if taken up to 5 days after unprotected sex. But the effectiveness decreases each day you wait to take the pill. They're most effective if taken within 3 days after unprotected sex.
2. **ella** is a pill that blocks the hormones bodies need to conceive. It works up to 5 days after unprotected sex, and it works just as well on the fifth day as it does on the first day. You need a prescription to get it.
3. **An intrauterine device (IUD)** is a small, T-shaped device inserted into a person's uterus by a trained health care provider. Some IUDs like Mirena and Liletta contain hormones, whereas Paragard, a copper IUD, is non-hormonal. Many folks use this method for regular birth control. Both hormonal and non-hormonal IUDs can be inserted up to 5 days after unprotected sex to prevent a pregnancy. IUDs can stay in place to prevent pregnancy for up to 12 years.
4. **The Yuzpe method** uses regular birth control pills taken in a specific way as emergency contraception. It only works with certain brands of birth control pills that contain doses of estrogen and progestin. While we don't cover this method in this FAQ resource, it works best up to 72 hours after unprotected sex.

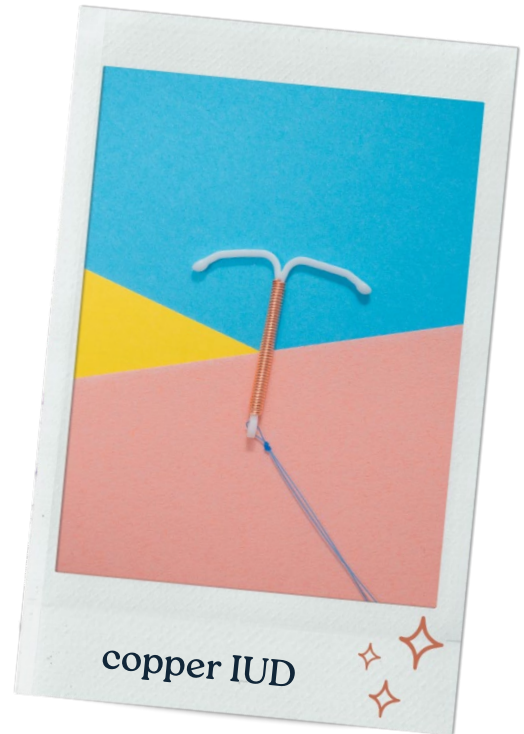
If you think you need EC, [take this quick quiz](#) to find out which type might be best for you. You can also [find a quick comparison chart here](#).



How much will it cost? Where can I get it?

Without insurance: it depends.

- Plan B and similar pills cost **\$40-50** at most pharmacies and drug stores if you pay for them on your own.³
 - Plan B can also be purchased online. [Use this search tool](#) to learn more about purchasing birth control, including EC, online.
 - Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and North Idaho have emergency contraception vending machines outside their clinic doors 24/7. Boxes are **\$25 each**. [Find a location here](#).
 - University health centers and local youth-serving organizations may have **free or low-cost** Plan B available. Call or check their websites to find out if they offer EC.
- IUDs can cost around **\$800-1300** without insurance.^{3,4}



With insurance: it's free.

- All health insurance plans in Washington must cover all contraceptives **for free**. This includes the EC pills listed above. Health insurance plans can be private plans through a parent or guardian or Apple Health (Medicaid). [Learn more about your rights to contraceptive coverage here](#).
 - **Apple Health:** [Learn more about getting free EC pills from a pharmacy with Apple Health insurance](#).
 - **Private insurance:** You will need to purchase EC at an “in-network” pharmacy at the pharmacy counter and ask the pharmacist to bill your health insurance. If they aren’t sure how to help you, you will need to pay on your own. Keep the receipt to get reimbursed by your insurance company later. This process is called “filing a claim.” It can take weeks to months to get your money back. Search for more information about finding an in-network pharmacy and filing a claim on your insurance plan’s website.

- IUD insertion is fully covered by insurance and will cost **\$0** for the service.⁵ But there may be a transportation cost for getting to and back from the clinic. A trained health care provider must insert IUDs, and the clinic will bill your insurance provider. You can check with the provider you usually visit for your health care for options. Or [use this clinic locator](#) to find a clinic that offers IUD insertion and other EC methods. [This video](#) has more information to help guide you through scheduling an appointment.
- **Claims process:** EC and over-the-counter contraceptives are typically covered by a health insurance plan's **prescription drug benefit**. Follow the claims process for prescription drug benefits on your insurance plan's website.
- **Accessing services confidentially:** The Family Planning Only program may help you access sexual health services confidentially. This program covers all forms of EC, and you may be eligible if you don't have health insurance or are not eligible for Apple Health. [Learn more on the Family Planning Only web page](#).

Can minors get EC without adult permission?

- **Yes.** Plan B is available without age restrictions. Minors can consent to or refuse an IUD on their own at any age without an authorized adult's permission.⁶ You can also request that your services stay confidential. [This video](#) has more information to help you request confidential services.
 - By law, health plans cannot share information about reproductive health services.⁷ This includes information about minors' health care to adults who pay for their plan. However, insurance companies often send billing information to the person who pays for insurance. If you want to make sure your billing stays confidential, contact your insurance company to ask about your options.
- **Including a trusted adult:** Navigating the health insurance process can be complicated. You can decide if and how to include a trusted adult in your decision-making process. [Here are some tips that may help](#) if you choose to talk to a parent for advice.



What to Expect

What exactly does “unprotected sex” mean?

Unprotected sex usually means sex without a condom or other form of contraception. It can also include situations where a condom breaks or slips off or when a person has missed two or more of their birth control pills.

If two people of any gender have sex where it’s possible for sperm and an egg to meet, there is a chance that pregnancy will happen. People who are sexually assaulted or forced to have sex without a condom may also need to access emergency contraception.¹²

“Unprotected” doesn’t mean irresponsible. Everyone deserves to access EC without judgment.

How effective is EC?

EC is safe and effective, but timing is important! The sooner you get it, the better.

- Taking Plan B (aka Take Action, My Way, Option 2, AfterPill, My Choice, and EContra) can lower your chance of getting pregnant by 75-89% if you take it within 3 days of unprotected sex. But you can take it up to 5 days after.⁸
- ella is the most effective EC pill and lowers pregnancy chances by 85% if you take it within 5 days of unprotected sex. But it’s more effective if you take it sooner.⁹
- The Yuzpe method lowers your chances of getting pregnant by about 74%. You must start Yuzpe within 72 hours of unprotected sex.¹¹
- The IUD is the most effective EC method. It can lower your chance of pregnancy by 99.9% if you get it inserted within 5 days of unprotected sex.¹⁰



What are the side effects of EC?

- Plan B pills may cause your next period to be a little different than what you typically experience. Some people also get headaches, upset stomach, dizziness, or tender breasts after taking it.⁸
- Taking ella might make you feel nauseated at first. It's also normal for your next period to be a little early or a little late. Your period might be heavier or lighter than usual.⁹
- The IUD insertion can be uncomfortable. It can feel like intense period cramps during insertion. Some people also experience cramping for a few days after. Copper IUDs can cause heavier periods, while hormonal IUDs can cause lighter periods.¹⁰ [Learn all about IUDs here.](#)

Will Plan B still work if I vomit after taking it?

- If you throw up within 2 hours of taking Plan B, it may not work. You'll need to take it again.⁸
- If you throw up within 3 hours of taking ella, it may not work. You'll need to take it again.⁹

What could make EC less effective?

- Taking different kinds of morning after pills, like Plan B and ella, at the same time or within 5 days of each other. Using different pills together may make them less effective.³
- Weight considerations:
 - IUDs work really well regardless of a person's weight.¹
 - ella may not be as effective if you weigh 195 pounds or more. Plan B may work less well if you weigh 155 pounds or more.¹
- **You can still safely take EC medications at any weight.** No one should be discouraged from using any form of EC based on their weight.¹³

Are there medications that can interact with EC in a bad way?

These medicines or herbs can make Plan B and ella pills not work as well^{8,9}:

- Some HIV medicines.
- Some prescription anti-seizure medicines or those prescribed to treat psychiatric disorders like bipolar disorder.
- The herb St. John's Wort.
- The antibiotic Rifampin. (other antibiotics don't make Plan B or ella less effective)
- The antifungal Griseofulvin. (other antifungals don't make Plan B or ella less effective)

You can talk to a health care provider or pharmacist about any medication interactions if you have more questions. If you can't get to a pharmacy or clinic, consider making a telehealth appointment. A health care provider can help you choose the best EC option for you.



EC Pills: Fast Facts

Fact: Taking EC pills frequently won't make them less effective.

- **You can safely take Plan B as often as you need to**, including more than once in the same menstrual cycle. There are no long-term side effects.³
- **Using ella more than once within the same menstrual cycle is not recommended.** But it is OK to take ella in different menstrual cycles.¹⁴
 - Talk to a health care provider about your options if you ever need to use ella more than once within the same menstrual cycle.

Fact: Using EC pills will not affect your fertility in the long-term.

- EC does not affect your ability to become pregnant in the future.³

Why is using primary birth control still a good idea?

Using a primary method of birth control is often more affordable, depending on your insurance. While EC pills are safe and effective, they are not as effective as primary birth control options like the pill, patch, and ring. They're also no match for long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) like the IUD or implant (Nexplanon). LARCs are the most effective methods available and help prevent pregnancy for years.

Talking to a provider about birth control methods or [exploring options online](#) are good choices. You can buy EC pills without a prescription even when you don't need them. This way, they're there for you in the future, just in case.

Want to learn more about sexual and reproductive health?

Find credible, compassionate health information at



doh.wa.gov/teenhealthhub

References

1. Washington State Department of Health. Birth Control and Emergency Contraception. Accessed January 9, 2024. <https://doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/sexual-and-reproductive-health/birth-control-and-emergency-contraception>
2. Gordon, MD LP. Emergency Contraception. Nemours TeensHealth. Accessed January 9, 2024. <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/contraception-emergency.html>
3. Planned Parenthood. What Kind of Emergency Contraception Is Best For Me? Accessed January 9, 2024. <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/morning-after-pill-emergency-contraception/which-kind-emergency-contraception-should-i-use>
4. Emergency Contraception | Types, Cost, Side Effects & Effectiveness. Bedsider. Accessed January 9, 2024. https://www.bedsider.org/birth-control/emergency_contraception
5. Washington state Office of the Insurance Commissioner. Reproductive and birth control health rights. Accessed January 9, 2024. <https://www.insurance.wa.gov/reproductive-and-birth-control-health-rights>
6. Northwest Justice Project. When can a minor access health care without parental consent? Washington Law Help. Accessed January 9, 2024. <https://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/resource/i-am-under-age-18-can-i-get-health-care-without-an-adults-consent>
7. Washington state Office of the Insurance Commissioner. Health information and your privacy. Accessed January 9, 2024. <https://www.insurance.wa.gov/health-information-and-your-privacy>
8. Planned Parenthood. Plan B Morning-After Pill | How Plan B Works & Side Effects. Accessed January 9, 2024. <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/morning-after-pill-emergency-contraception/whats-plan-b-morning-after-pill>
9. Planned Parenthood. What is the ella Morning-After Pill? | Cost & Effectiveness. Accessed January 9, 2024. <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/morning-after-pill-emergency-contraception/whats-ella-morning-after-pill>
10. Planned Parenthood. How Does the Copper IUD Work as Emergency Contraception? Accessed January 9, 2024. <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/morning-after-pill-emergency-contraception/how-do-iuds-work-emergency-contraception>
11. Alkon C. An Emergency Contraception Option: The Yuzpe Method Uses Birth Control Pills. EverydayHealth.com. Published July 8, 2022. Accessed January 9, 2024. <https://www.everydayhealth.com/sexual-health/what-is-the-yuzpe-method-of-emergency-contraception/>
12. Planned Parenthood. How Pregnancy Happens. Accessed January 9, 2024. <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/pregnancy/how-pregnancy-happens>
13. Hyacinth S. Contraceptive Pearl: Discussing Emergency Contraception & Weight. Reproductive Health Access Project. Accessed January 9, 2024. <https://www.reproductiveaccess.org/resource/discussing-emergency-contraception-weight/>
14. Can you take ella® twice in one cycle? ellaone USA. Accessed January 9, 2024. <https://www.ella-now.com/faqs/can-you-take-ella-twice-in-one-cycle/>

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email doh.information@doh.wa.gov.