



# Emergency Contraception (EC)

No contraceptive method, aside from abstinence, is 100% effective – condoms may be used incorrectly and pills are sometimes missed. Sometimes sex is unplanned. There are other times when a woman is forced to have sex, protected or unprotected, as in the case of rape or sexual assault. In these instances, there is a window when a woman can prevent an unintended pregnancy after sexual intercourse.<sup>1,7</sup>

## **EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION (EC): THE FACTS**

- **EC** is now available over-the-counter (OTC) for females and males 18 and older;<sup>2</sup>
- **EC** is also available by prescription from health care providers, health centers, and other women's health and family planning centers for females younger than 18;<sup>4,6,9</sup>
- **EC** is a concentrated dose of hormones found in daily birth control pills;<sup>8,9</sup>
- **EC** is a safe, effective method that has been used by many women throughout the world to prevent unintended pregnancies;<sup>7,9</sup>
- **EC** can prevent pregnancy after unprotected vaginal intercourse;<sup>2,7</sup>
- **EC** is also called the “morning-after” pill or Plan B;<sup>2,7,8</sup>
- **EC** prevents pregnancy by delaying or inhibiting ovulation, inhibiting fertilization, or preventing implantation;<sup>1,6,8,9</sup>
- **EC** will not interrupt, terminate or harm an already implanted fertilized egg;<sup>1,4,6</sup>
- **EC** should not replace correct and consistent use of condoms and contraception.<sup>1,8</sup>

## **EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION (EC): THE RESEARCH**

- **EC** pills work best when taken as soon as possible after unprotected intercourse;<sup>4,6</sup>
- **EC** pills reduce the risk of pregnancy by up to 89% if taken within 72 hours;<sup>9</sup>
- **EC** could prevent roughly half of the unintended pregnancies in the United States with widespread use and awareness;<sup>4,5</sup>
- **EC** is meant for emergencies only;
- **EC** is not as effective as the correct and consistent use of condoms and contraception;<sup>1,2,4,9</sup>
- **EC** offers no protection against HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.<sup>2,4,9</sup>

## **EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION (EC): THE SUPPORT**

**American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP):** “Education and counseling about emergency contraception should be a part of the annual preventive health care visit for all teen and young adult patients when sexuality issues are addressed.”<sup>4</sup>

**American Medical Association (AMA):** “Health care professionals should be encouraged to play a more active role in providing education about emergency contraception, including access and informed consent issues, by discussing it as part of routine family planning and contraceptive counseling; information about emergency contraception is part of the comprehensive information to be provided as part of the emergency treatment of sexual assault victims.”<sup>3</sup>

**American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG):** “ACOG and other organizations have estimated that greater access to emergency contraceptives could cut the United States unintended pregnancy and abortion rates in half.”<sup>5</sup>

Sources:

1. US Department of Health and Human Services, National Women's Health Information Center, November 2002, retrieved February 2006 (<http://www.womenshealth.gov/faq/econtracep.htm>)

2. Office of Population Research, Princeton University, January 2006, retrieved February 2006 (<http://ec.princeton.edu>)

3. American Medical Association, Policy Number H-75.985, Access to Emergency Contraception, retrieved February 2006 (<http://www.ama-assn.org/>)

4. American Academy of Pediatrics, Policy Statement on Emergency Contraception, October 2005, retrieved February 2006 (<http://www.aap.org/>)

5. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Statement of ACOG President on EC study, January 2005, retrieved February 2006 (<http://www.acog.org/>)

6. Healthy Teen Network, Policy Statement on Emergency Contraception for Adolescents, January 2006, retrieved January 2006 ([www.noappp.org](http://www.noappp.org))

7. Advocates for Youth, Emergency Contraception: A Safe & Effective Contraceptive Option for Teens, 2005, retrieved December 2005 ([www.advocatesforyouth.org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org))

8. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Women's Health Policy Facts, November 2005, retrieved February 2006 ([www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org))

9. Back Up your Birth Control with EC, retrieved February 2006 ([www.backupyourbirthcontrol.org](http://www.backupyourbirthcontrol.org))

10. Society for Adolescent Medicine. Provision of emergency contraception to adolescents: position paper of the Society for Adolescent Medicine. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 2004, 35:66-70.

## Key Points about Emergency Contraception(EC)

1. **EC** is a safe, effective method to prevent unintended pregnancy.<sup>7,9</sup>
2. **EC** is available over-the-counter for adults 18 and older.<sup>4</sup>
3. **EC** contains concentrated doses of the same hormones found in daily birth control pills.<sup>8,9</sup>
4. **EC** prevents pregnancy by delaying or inhibiting ovulation, inhibiting fertilization or preventing implantation. EC will not interrupt, terminate or harm an already implanted fertilized egg.<sup>1,4,6,8,9</sup>
5. **EC** is also called the Morning After Pill or Plan B.<sup>2,7,8</sup>
6. **EC** can reduce the risk of pregnancy by up to 85% when taken within the first 72 hours following unprotected intercourse.<sup>1,4,9</sup>
7. **EC** should NOT replace consistent and correct contraceptive use.<sup>1,2,4,8,9</sup>
8. **EC** should be provided as a part of the emergency treatment of sexual assault survivors.<sup>4</sup>
9. **EC** offers NO protection against HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.<sup>2,4,9</sup>
10. **EC** is meant for EMERGENCIES ONLY.

## When you should consider taking Emergency Contraceptive Pills

1. Neither you or your partner used birth control
2. You realized you missed taking your birth control for two or more days
3. The condom broke or slipped off
4. You were raped or sexually assaulted

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