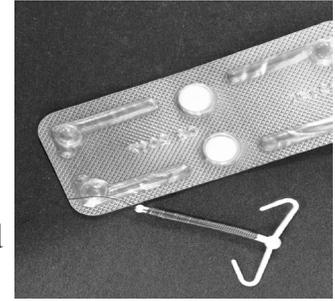


# Emergency Contraception



## What is Emergency Contraception?

Emergency Contraception (EC) helps prevent pregnancy if you've had unprotected sex or you're not sure if you're protected from pregnancy. EC should be used as soon as possible after unprotected sex.

Forms of EC	
Copper Intrauterine Device (IUD)	Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECPs)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a small, soft, T-shaped device with a copper wire wrapped around it</li> <li>• can be put into the uterus up to 7 days after unprotected sex</li> <li>• reduces the risk of pregnancy after unprotected sex by 99%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 types: levonorgestrel and ulipristal acetate</li> <li>• can be used up to 5 days (120 hours) after unprotected sex</li> <li>• reduces risk of pregnancy by 50-90% depending on type of pill used and how soon it is used after unprotected sex</li> </ul>

- EC doesn't protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV.
- Repeat use of ECPs is safe, but should not replace regular birth control as they do not work as well and can have more side effects.
- The Copper IUD is the most effective form of EC and can be used as ongoing birth control.

## When is EC used?

You can use EC to help prevent pregnancy if:

- no birth control was used
- there was sex you didn't consent to (sexual assault)
- withdrawal (pulling out) was used
- a condom broke, leaked, slipped, or fell off
- your method of birth control wasn't used the right way (e.g., missed birth control pills, patch, ring, or injection)
- mistimed fertility awareness (sex occurred during fertile period)

If you use hormonal birth control (e.g., birth control pills, birth control patch, vaginal ring, birth control injection) and need help deciding if you need EC, go to [www.sexandu.ca](http://www.sexandu.ca), click on contraception, and look for Stay On Schedule.

Talk to a pharmacist or health care provider if you have any health concerns, are breastfeeding or taking medicine.

Do a pregnancy test if you don't get your period within 3 weeks of using EC or if your period is different than normal.

## How do I choose which type of EC to use?

	<b>Copper IUD</b>	<b>Levonorgestrel ECP (e.g., Plan B<sup>®</sup>, NorLevo<sup>®</sup>, Next Choice<sup>®</sup>, Option 2<sup>®</sup>)</b>	<b>Ulipristal Acetate ECP (e.g., Ella<sup>®</sup>)</b>
<b>What it is</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>may prevent an egg and sperm from joining and may prevent a fertilized egg from attaching to the uterus</li> <li>works as birth control for 3 to 10 years after it's put in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sometimes called the "morning-after pill"</li> <li>delays an egg from being released</li> <li>doesn't provide ongoing protection from pregnancy</li> <li>can be used more than 1 time in a menstrual cycle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>delays an egg from being released</li> <li>doesn't provide ongoing protection from pregnancy</li> <li>can be used more than 1 time in a menstrual cycle</li> </ul>
<b>How to get it</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>need</b> a prescription</li> <li>put in by a health care provider (call your clinic to see if this is offered)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>don't need a prescription</li> <li>you can get it at most drugstores and sexual health clinics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>need</b> a prescription</li> </ul>
<b>How well it works</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>most effective form of EC</b></li> <li>decreases pregnancy risk by 99% if put in within 7 days of unprotected sex</li> <li>may not be recommended if you've had unprotected sex earlier in the same menstrual cycle as you may already be pregnant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>can</b> be used in case of missed hormonal contraception</li> <li>is more effective the earlier it's taken after unprotected sex</li> <li>works best if taken within 24 hours after unprotected sex</li> <li>how well it works decreases significantly after 72 hours</li> <li>decreases pregnancy risk by 50 to 90%, depending when it's taken</li> <li>don't take with ulipristal acetate ECP because it won't work as well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>should not be used if hormonal contraception or levonorgestrel ECP was used in the last 7 days</li> <li>more effective than levonorgestrel</li> <li>has same effectiveness if taken up to 5 days after unprotected sex</li> <li>decreases pregnancy risk by about 85%</li> <li>don't take with levonorgestrel ECP because it won't work as well</li> </ul>
<b>Weight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>effective regardless of weight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>may not work as well for people who weigh more than 165 lbs. (75 kg) or with a BMI* that's more than 25</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>may not work as well for people with a BMI* that's more than 35</li> </ul>
<b>Safe while Breastfeeding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>yes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>yes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes, breastmilk should be expressed and discarded for 24 hours. Discuss with your health care provider.</li> </ul>

\*BMI = body mass index. BMI is a measure of a person's body fat based on their height and weight. To calculate your BMI, go to [myhealth.alberta.ca](http://myhealth.alberta.ca) and search for "BMI" or talk to your health care provider.

## What do I need to know about ECPs?

- Different types of ECPs should **not** be taken together—this means **don't** take them at the same time or within 7 days of each other. They will **not** work as well when taken together.
- There's a greater chance of getting pregnant if you use ECPs and then keep having unprotected sex in the same menstrual cycle.
- If unprotected sex has happened more than **1 time in 24 hours**, you only need **1 dose** of ECP.
- Think about keeping an extra pack of ECPs at home.
- You can take ECPs more than once in a menstrual cycle
- No matter how much you weigh, ECPs may still protect you from pregnancy and should be taken if you can't have a copper IUD put in.
- Do not take ECPs if you have a confirmed pregnancy because they won't work.
- If you throw up within two hours of taking EC, contact your health care provider as you may need to take another dose.

## Levonorgestrel ECP

Take 1.5 mg (the full dose of levonorgestrel) as soon as possible after unprotected sex.

Levonorgestrel ECP does **not** provide ongoing protection from pregnancy. After you take it:

- Keep using your regular form of birth control at the usual time
- You can start a new cycle of hormonal birth control (e.g., birth control pill, patch, ring, injection) or have a birth control implant or hormonal IUD put in on the same day or the next day
- It will take 7 days for your hormonal birth control to start working. It's best not to have sex during this time. However, if you do, use a back up method (e.g., condom) **every time**.

## Ulipristal Acetate ECP

Take 30 mg (the full dose of ulipristal acetate) as soon as possible after unprotected sex.

Ulipristal acetate ECP does **not** provide ongoing protection from pregnancy.

Do **not** start hormonal birth control right away—it may prevent ulipristal acetate from working.

- You can start using your new or regular form of hormonal birth control (e.g., birth control pill, patch, ring, injection) or have a hormonal IUD or birth control implant put in) **5 days after** taking ulipristal acetate.

- After you start the birth control pill, patch, ring, or injection it will take **7 days** to start working. This means you are not protected from pregnancy and must use a back up method (e.g., condom) or abstinence for **12 days** after taking ulipristal acetate.
- If you are starting a progestin-only pill (POP) it will take **2 days** to start working. This means you are not protected from pregnancy and must use a back up method (e.g., condom) or abstinence for **7 days** after taking ulipristal acetate.

### What are the side effects of ECPs?

You may have light bleeding or spotting for a few days. This is not your period. You might have a change in the timing of your next period, and it might be early, on time, or late.

Other side effects may include:

- upset stomach (nausea)
- dizziness
- sore breasts
- throwing up
- headache
- feeling more tired than normal
- pain in the abdomen

### Did you know?

- You have the right to decide to have sex or not. Talk with your partner(s) about consent.
- There's an 85% chance of becoming pregnant within one year, if no birth control is used for vaginal sex.
- Use a condom every time you have sex (oral, vaginal, anal). Condoms help prevent pregnancy, STIs and HIV.
- You can lower your risk of HIV by taking an HIV prevention pill every day. Many Albertans can get it for free. Visit [www.prepalberta.ca](http://www.prepalberta.ca) to find out more.
- Transgender and gender diverse people who have a uterus can use hormonal birth control. It can help prevent pregnancy and make periods lighter and less painful.

### Websites

- [ahs.ca/srh](http://ahs.ca/srh)
- [ReadyorNotAlberta.ca](http://ReadyorNotAlberta.ca)
- [TeachingSexualHealth.ca](http://TeachingSexualHealth.ca)
- [myhealth.alberta.ca](http://myhealth.alberta.ca)
- [sexandu.ca](http://sexandu.ca)

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at 811.



Scan for more information