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# Emergency Contraception

## *What You Need to Know*



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### **What is emergency contraception?**

Emergency contraception are pills or a device that can help prevent pregnancy after sex without birth control or if the birth control method may not have worked correctly. Emergency contraception must be used as soon as possible within 5 days after unprotected sex to help prevent pregnancy.

Emergency contraceptives are not meant for use as regular birth control. Most other types of Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved birth control, when used correctly, are much better at preventing pregnancy than emergency contraception. Also, while emergency contraception pills are safe for emergency use, they have not been tested as regular birth control and are not approved by the FDA for this purpose.

### **How does emergency contraception work?**

Emergency contraception pills work mostly by preventing or delaying ovulation (the release of an egg from the ovary). Emergency contraception may also prevent fertilization of the egg by the sperm if ovulation has already happened.

If a woman is already pregnant, emergency contraception pills do not stop or harm the pregnancy.

### **What are the side effects of using emergency contraception?**

Side effects may be different for each woman, and may include:

- Headache
- Abdominal pain
- Tiredness
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Breast pain

Side effects are usually mild and do not last long. The next menstrual period may come early or late, and may be heavier, lighter, spotty, and more or less painful than normal.

Take a pregnancy test if the next menstrual period does not happen more than one week after expected or if pregnancy is suspected after taking emergency contraception pills.

### **Does emergency contraception protect against STIs?**

Emergency contraception does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). To lower the risk of getting an STI, always use condoms when having vaginal, oral, or anal sex. See a doctor right away if exposure to an STI might have occurred. Medicine can be given to help prevent HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

## How do I get emergency contraception?

There are four options for emergency contraception:

- Plan B One-Step® and similar generic versions are available in stores without a prescription to anyone, of any age. Ask the pharmacist for help if it is not found on the shelf.
- Levonorgestrel tablets (two-pill generic Next Choice® and LNG tablets 0.75 mg) are available to people aged 17 and older without a prescription. These brands are sold from the pharmacy counter.
- ella® is available only by prescription from a doctor, nurse, or family planning clinic.
- ParaGard, a copper IUD, can be inserted by a health care provider as soon as possible within five days after unprotected sex.

## Is there free or low-cost emergency contraception?

Under the Affordable Care Act, most insurance plans cover FDA-approved prescriptions for emergency contraception and birth control at no out-of-pocket cost. Call your insurance company to find out if your plan covers over-the-counter emergency contraception. A prescription from a doctor may be needed for the insurance plan to pay.

Medicaid coverage of emergency contraception varies between states. Michigan Medicaid plans include emergency contraception pills in their drug coverage, as well as the cost of the ParaGard IUD and insertion. Check with your Medicaid program if you have questions about your plan's coverage.

Family planning clinics may provide emergency contraception for free or at low cost to women who are uninsured. More resources can be found on the Oakland County Health Division (OCHD)'s website at [OakGov.com/Health](http://OakGov.com/Health) or by calling OCHD Nurse on Call at 800-848-5533.



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