Emergency Contraception (EC)

**What is Emergency Contraception?**
Emergency Contraception (EC) is birth control used after unprotected sex to help prevent pregnancy. It works by delaying or temporarily stopping ovulation (the release of an egg that can be fertilized by sperm), or by changing the environment of the uterus or cervix so that sperm and egg do not meet.

EC is best used right away (or up to five days after sex) if you think your birth control failed, you didn’t use contraception, or vaginal intercourse was unplanned, unintended, or unwanted.

**What are the different types of EC?**

**Progestin-only Pills:** Plan B, Plan B One-Step, Next Choice, and Levonorgestrel Tablets are available for sale directly from pharmacists without a prescription to women and men age 17 or older. Prescriptions are required for anyone 16 or younger.

**Ulipristal Acetate Pills:** Ella is available by prescription only. Research suggests ella is more effective than progestin-only pills when taken around the time of ovulation, on day four or five following unprotected sex, and by heavier women. When taking ella, it’s important to remember:
- Use only once per menstrual cycle.
- If you use hormonal birth control now, abstain from vaginal sex or use a back-up method until the end of your pill pack or ring cycle.
- Many health insurance plans allow you to obtain emergency contraception at no cost to you, when you have a prescription. Call Gannett if you need a prescription now, or would like to have one on hand.

**Copper-T IUD:** IUDs require an appointment with a health care provider for insertion. In addition to EC, an IUD can be used as ongoing contraception for up to 10 years. Though highly effective, they are not appropriate for all women. Women who have chlamydia or gonorrhea infections are at increased risk of pelvic infections and infertility if an IUD is inserted before the infection is successfully treated.

**How effective is EC?**

**Pills**
EC can reduce the risk of pregnancy by 52 to 100 percent, depending on how soon you take it, the brand, and timing of unprotected sex related to your cycle.
If you do not get your period within three weeks of taking EC, a pregnancy test is recommended.

**Copper-T IUD**
Emergency insertion of a copper IUD up to five days after unprotected sex can reduce the risk of pregnancy by up to 99 percent. Though emergency contraception is an option for up to five days after unprotected sex, it should be used as soon as possible to maximize effectiveness.

**What is the best choice for you?**
- If it has been four or five days since unprotected sex, prescription EC may be your best option. Meet with a nurse to ask about a prescription (free visit).
- If you have a BMI of 26 to 35*, prescription EC may be your best option. Meet with a nurse to ask about a prescription (free visit).
- If you are thinking about having an emergency IUD placed, meet with a nurse to discuss.
- If you have concerns about being exposed to a sexually transmitted infection, had sex against your will, or are not sure if you need emergency contraception, please speak with a Gannett nurse by phone (255-5155, available 24/7) or in-person.

**Just in case**
State and international laws vary regarding the availability of EC (both over-the-counter and by prescription). If you will be leaving campus for a considerable period of time (e.g., summer or winter break, going abroad for a semester), plan ahead. You may want to consider purchasing EC pills to have on hand in case of future contraceptive failure or other emergencies. Talk to your health care provider about this option during a Well Woman visit or other medical appointment.

**For more information**
- www.gannett.cornell.edu [search “EC”]
- www.planbonestep.com/index2.aspx
- www.ella-rx.com/
- www.not-2-late.com

*Calculate your BMI here: www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/bminojs.htm

**Contact Us:**
We’re open Mon–Sat, except for breaks. Check web for hours: www.gannett.cornell.edu

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