

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION (Morning After Pill)

Emergency contraception is used in the prevention of unintended pregnancy after intercourse in situation such as:

- No birth control method was used (after an unprotected intercourse).
- When standard contraceptives might have failed (e.g condom breakage, missed combined oral contraceptive pills).
- In case of rape.

How does it work?

Emergency contraception is not considered as an abortion. The procedure works by hormonally or mechanically altering the lining of the uterus. The hormone pills can also prevent or delay ovulation while the IUD will block fertilization and implantation.

How effective is emergency contraception?

For hormonal type, the effective ranges from 56 to 93%, depending on the timing of first dose. The effectiveness is reduced the longer the interval between the unprotected intercourse and taking the emergency contraception. The intrauterine device is much more effective than the hormonal pills.

Types of emergency contraception

1. Hormonal (Morning-after pills) - is a sequence of two doses of hormonal pills taken 12 hours apart. The first dose should be taken within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse.
 - Progestogen only pills - can also be taken as a single dose for convenience.
 - Combined type (oestrogen and progestogen) - this can be made up of certain combined oral contraceptives brand that are currently available. .
2. Non-hormonal (Intrauterine device) - An intrauterine contraception device is a birth control device that is inserted into a woman's uterus by a doctor. Insertion can be done within 5 days of an unprotected intercourse. This is suitable for women who desire a long-term contraceptive method at the same time.

Side effects

Side effects include nausea, vomiting, headache, breast tenderness, bloated feeling and swelling of hands and feet. The side effects may be less with the progestogen-only pills.

Advantages

- Emergency contraception is generally effective for birth control (up to 93%, depending on the timing of administration).
- It is an immediate form of birth control should unexpected intercourse occur, such as with rape victims.
- It is a backup birth control option for couples experiencing failure of other methods: expulsion of an intrauterine contraception device, condom breakage or missed

combined oral contraceptive pills.

- If IUD is used, it can be a form of long-term birth control following insertion.

Disadvantages

- Not 100% effective for birth control.
- May not be widely available.
- Presence of side-effects.

What to expect after taking the hormonal pills?

- Use a barrier method until the next menses
- Most women will menstruate within one week (earlier or delayed) of their expected menses. In a small proportion of them, their menses will be delayed.
- Discuss with your doctor regarding other method of birth control if you are still sexually active.

See your doctor immediately if you:

- Suspect pregnancy after undergoing treatment e.g menses was delayed.
- Developed unexpected or serious adverse reaction.

Disclaimer

This is for informational purposes only and is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. It is important for readers to seek proper medical advice when necessary.

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