

What is The Emergency Pill?

The emergency pill (sometimes called the morning after pill,) is a special dose oral contraceptive pill. You take it to reduce the chance of pregnancy after unprotected sex, i.e. if you did not use contraception, or if you used a condom but it broke or slipped off during sex.

If you have unprotected sex and you don't want to get pregnant, you need to take the emergency pill as soon as possible and within 5 days of the first unprotected intercourse. The sooner it is taken after unprotected sex the better the treatment works. The longer you leave it after the unprotected sex, the higher the failure rate.

How does the emergency pill work?

The emergency pill works in two ways:

1. It delays ovulation (the release of an egg from your ovaries),
2. If ovulation has already taken place, it can stop a fertilised egg from implanting in the womb.

You should keep on using other contraception, eg. the pill or condoms, for the rest of the cycle in case you ovulate AFTER taking the emergency pill. Otherwise you could still become pregnant.

How to take the emergency pill?

Take the 2 pills together as one dose within 5 days after unprotected sex. It is very important you take the pills as soon as possible after unprotected sex.

Are there any side effects?

Most women do not get side effects after taking the medication. Rarely, some women may have nausea and vomiting, breast discomfort and changes in their menstrual pattern.

Vomiting after taking the pills

If you vomit within two hours of taking the pills, you will need to return to the clinic or see a doctor as soon as possible, as you will need to repeat the dose.

When to expect your period

Most women have a period at the expected time. If your period is more than a week overdue, talk to a Sexual Health Clinic or your local doctor and have a pregnancy test done just to be sure.

What other options do I have?

The IUD (intrauterine device) is a small flexible plastic and/or copper object that is

inserted into your uterus (womb) through the vagina. IUDs stop pregnancy by preventing the sperm and egg from meeting and the egg from settling in the uterus. This is a good option for women who are planning to use an IUD as a long-term method of contraception. It is 99% effective if inserted within five days of the unprotected sex.

Protect Yourself

Emergency contraception is not meant to be used as a regular form of contraception. It is for emergencies only. Also, it does not protect you against sexually transmissible infections. As you have had unprotected sex or a broken condom, you may want to consider testing for sexually transmissible infections. The tests should be done 10-14 days after the unprotected sex or broken condom either by your local doctor or sexual health clinic.

If you do not have a regular method of contraception, talk to a Sexual Health Clinic, or your local doctor to find out what suits you best. Whatever method you choose, you may want to use condoms as well, because they will help to protect you against sexually transmitted infections. If you rely on condoms alone for contraception, it may be wise to have the emergency pill available at home in case a condom breaks or slips off. Ask the nurse or doctor about this.