

Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP)



Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH AND
PARAMEDIC SERVICES

What is the Emergency Contraceptive Pill?

Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECPs or Plan B) are hormone pills that decrease the risk of becoming pregnant. These pills are approved for use when a woman has had unprotected sexual intercourse in the last five days (120 hours). ECPs help prevent pregnancy, but do not protect against Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).

How ECPs work

ECPs work in a number of ways. If taken within five days of unprotected sex, the pills work to either keep you from ovulating or, if you have already ovulated, it prevents the egg from getting fertilized or being implanted in your uterus.

Where to get Emergency Contraceptive Pills

- Public Health's Sexual Health Clinic provides birth control counselling and birth control sales, including Emergency Contraceptive Pills.
- You can also get Plan B without a prescription from a pharmacist or, if you are a university student, at the university health centres.

How to use Emergency Contraceptive

Take two pills as soon as possible. These two pills must be taken for the treatment to be effective. If you vomit within one hour of taking your pills, you will need to replace the lost pills. Visit the Sexual Health Clinic, your doctor, or a walk-in clinic to replace vomited pills.

What should I expect after taking the Emergency Contraceptive Pill?

You may have some spotting for a few days after taking the emergency contraceptive pills. Wearing a panty liner for two to three days is a good idea. **THIS IS NOT YOUR PERIOD.** If your next period is late, you need a pregnancy test. See your doctor or phone the Sexual Health Clinic at Public Health.

Side effects of Emergency Contraceptive Pills

ECPs are safe and side effects of ECPs are temporary (you might experience some nausea or vomiting).

- Ninety-five per cent of expected pregnancies are prevented when taking these pills within 24 hours of unprotected intercourse. It's less effective in preventing pregnancy when more than 24 hours has lapsed.
- If your period does not come within three weeks after taking ECPs, you should get a pregnancy test.
- It is recommended that after taking ECPs you should not have sex until your next period. If you do decide to have sex, use another method of birth control such as condoms.

**ECPs will not work if you are pregnant.
ECPs are not abortion pills.**

See your doctor or go to the emergency room right away if you have any of the following:

- itching all over your body
- severe cramping or pain in your stomach or belly prior to your next normal period
- severe migraine develops, or migraine is different from past migraines

Sexual Health/Harm Reduction Program

For clinic times call 519-883-2314

All clinical and counselling services are free and confidential. No health card is required to receive services.

Questions?

Call the Region of Waterloo Public Health Sexual Health Program or your doctor.



Scan this code with your smartphone for more information about sexual health clinics and services.

Alternate formats of this document are available upon request.

Region of Waterloo Public Health and Paramedic Services

Infectious Diseases

www.regionofwaterloo.ca/ph

519-575-4400 TTY 519-575-4608 Fax 519-883-2241