

Emergency Contraception Fast Facts

✓ What is emergency contraception (EC)?

- EC reduces the chance of pregnancy:
 - after unprotected vaginal intercourse;
 - when a contraceptive method is suspected of failing (e.g., condom breaks or slips off; two or more missed birth control pills); or
 - following sexual assault.
- EC prevents pregnancy **before** it occurs.
- EC is used within 5 days after unprotected sex to prevent pregnancy.

⊘ What is it not?

- EC will **not** end an existing pregnancy.
- EC does **not** work if pregnancy has already occurred.
- EC is **not** the abortion pill, so EC is **not** impacted by restrictions on abortion.

Types of Emergency Contraception	Brands	Timing of use after sex	Reduces pregnancy risk by	Requires
IUD	<i>Liletta, Mirena, Paragard</i>	5 days	99%	health care provider to insert
Ulipristal acetate (UPA)	<i>ella®</i>	5 days	85% (may be less effective if over 194 lbs)	prescription
Levonorgestrel	<i>My Way™, Next Choice™, Plan B, One Step™ etc.</i>	3-5 days (less effective after 3 days)	81-90% (may be less effective if over 165 lbs)	no prescription
Combined hormonal pills	<i>Many</i>	5 days	74%	prescription

What else is important to know?

- The sooner EC pills are taken, the more likely they are to work.
- EC pills are not as effective in preventing pregnancy as a birth control method used consistently and correctly.
- EC pills may be prescribed to have on hand before they are needed.

Detailed information and citations can be found in the [Emergency Contraception Facts for Family Planning Staff Job Aid](#) and the [Emergency Contraception \(EC\) Methods Table](#).