

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

If you've had sex without using contraception or when you think your contraception might have failed, there are 2 emergency methods you can use.

1. Hormonal pill (emergency pill).It must be taken up to 3 days – 72 hours after sex. It is more effective the earlier it is taken after sex.

Intrauterine contraceptive device (iud), this must be fitted up to five days after sex or up to five days after the earliest time that you could have released an egg (ovulation). These are further discussed in the sections The Emergency Pill and The IUD.

WHAT IS THE EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILL?

Emergency contraceptive pill is a tablet containing progestogen (hormone), a hormone similar to the naturally occurring progesterone women produce in their ovaries.

HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILL?

It is very effective and is even more effective the sooner it is taken after sex.

However it is not as effective as using other methods of contraception regularly. It does not protect you against sexually transmitted infections.

Research shows that of the pregnancies that could be expected to have occurred if no emergency contraception had been used, the emergency pill will prevent;

95% of pregnancies if taken within 24 hours,
85% of pregnancies if taken between 25 and 48 hours
58% of pregnancies if taken between 49 and 72 hours

If the emergency pill is taken after 72 hours it is not known how effective it will be.

HOW IS IT TAKEN?

You take one pill of the emergency pill within 3 days (72 hours) of unprotected sex. It is more effective the sooner it is taken.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

- The emergency pill is most likely to stop an egg being released (ovulation)
- It delays ovulation. It may indeed also stop a fertilised egg from settling in your womb (implanting).

CAN ANY BODY USE IT?

Virtually any woman can use it. The only issue is if you are on certain medicines, so please tell your doctor of all medicatio

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

- There are no serious short or long term side effects using the emergency pill. There may be some passing transitory feeling of nausea, dizziness, breast tenderness or abdominal pain.
- A very small number of women might vomit.
- It can disrupt your periods.

HOW WILL IT AFFECT YOUR NEXT PERIOD?

It may come on time or be a few days early or late.

WHEN DO YOU NEED TO BE CHECKED ?

You need to be checked

- If after taking it you still think that you may be pregnant
- If your next period is more than 7 days late
- If your period is shorter or lighter than usual
- If you have any unusual pain in your lower abdomen

Being reviewed also gives you a chance to be reviewed for regular contraception and raise the possibility of any STI's.

WHAT ABOUT IF IT DOESNT WORK?

It is really very effective but how and ever failure is in everything, just like medicine, and if it fails there have been no documented evidence of increased risk of damage to a baby as a result of failed morning after pill.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF IT HAS WORKED?

If you have taken the emergency pill correctly and your next period seems normal it is unlikely that you will be pregnant. If you think you feel pregnant or if you have not had a normal period within 3 weeks of taking it or if you do not have a bleed when you've had the 7 day break when using the combined pill or the patch or when you take the placebo tablets with the everyday combined pill, a pregnancy test result will be accurate if the test is done 3 weeks after the last time you've had unprotected sex.

HOW MANY TIMES CAN I USE THE EMERGENCY PILL?

As many times as you need to. However this would still not be as reliable as using a regular long term method of contraception.

SHOULD YOU GET EMERGENCY PILLS IN ADVANCE?

If you are worried about a contraceptive method failing or if you are going to be abroad on holidays and think you may need emergency contraception it might be worth while discussing your contraceptive needs with your family planning advisor.