

- ECPs do NOT affect your ability to get pregnant in the future.
- Your partner(s) doesn't have to be involved.
- For progestin ECP, you do not need a prescription.

Disadvantages of ECPs

- They are not as effective as other birth control methods.
- Depending on where you get them and how often you use them, they can be more expensive than other methods of birth control.
- You may experience side effects.
- For Ella, you need a prescription.
- You are not protected from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- In the rare case that a pregnancy does occur, there is a slightly increased risk of that pregnancy being ectopic (a pregnancy that occurs outside the uterus, often in a fallopian tube).

Remember

- Progestin ECP/Plan B and Ella can interfere with each other and shouldn't be taken together.
- The sooner you take an ECP, the more effective it is. You can often get progestin ECP/Plan B from sexual health clinics quickly, and you can buy it directly from a pharmacy without a prescription.

For youth ages 13-29

Planned Parenthood Toronto Health Services

Offers drop-in and scheduled appointments
Call 416-961-0113 or visit www.ppt.on.ca

For youth ages 13-19

Teen Health Source

Offers anonymous and confidential sexual health information for teens by teens.
Text (647) 933-5399, call (416) 961-3200, email teenhealthsource@ppt.on.ca
Chat online and visit www.teenhealthsource.com

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birth control options series

emergency contraception

What is emergency contraception?

- Emergency contraception describes the use of pills or a copper IUD in an emergency measure to prevent pregnancy.

There are 3 kinds of emergency contraception:

- Progestin ECP (brand names Plan B, Contingency One, Backup Plan) is a pill that contains levonorgestrel, which is a hormone called a progestin that is also used in some birth control pills.
- Ella is a pill that contains ulipristal acetate, which acts on progesterone receptors to block the effects of progesterone.
- A copper IUD can be used as emergency contraception if inserted up to 7 days after sperm has entered your vagina*.

When do you use emergency contraception?

- You can use them if something goes wrong with using your usual form of birth control. For example, if you miss a pill, forget to put on a new patch or insert a new ring, or a condom breaks or slips off.
- You can use them if you had vaginal sex/sperm has entered your vagina and you didn't use any form of birth control or condom.

How does emergency contraception prevent pregnancy?

- In order to get pregnant, sperm must enter your vagina, swim up into your uterus* and fertilize an egg that has been released from your ovaries* during ovulation.
- Both progestin ECPs (Plan B etc.) and Ella work by preventing or delaying you from ovulating for up to 5 days.
- The copper IUD prevents pregnancy by changing the chemistry of the uterus to make it hard for sperm and eggs to survive and meet.

*We know that these aren't the words everyone uses for their bodies (e.g. trans folks), and support you using the language that feels best for you.

How effective is emergency contraception?

- The sooner you take EC, the more effective it is.

emergency contraception effectiveness by method/timing

| method | timing after sperm has entered vagina | efficacy |
|---|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| progestin ECP (Plan B, Contingency One, Backup Plan) | Up to 3 days (72 hours) | very effective |
| | 4-5 days (73-120 hours) | less effective |
| Ella (ulipristal acetate ECP) | Up to 5 days (120 hours) | very effective |
| copper IUD | Up to 7 days (168 hours) | very effective |

- A recent study shows progestin ECP (Plan B) and Ella may be less effective for people who weigh more than 165lbs. However, for this group of people, Ella is more effective than progestin ECP.

Copper IUD

- The copper IUD costs about \$50-75 at sexual health clinics and you need an appointment with a clinician to get it inserted, but it can also provide ongoing birth control for several years once you have it. For more info about the copper IUD, check out our copper IUD fact sheet.

The rest of this factsheet will deal with information about Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECPs).

How do you use emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs)?

- Progestin ECP (Plan B) is 1 pill that can be taken within 5 days after sperm has entered your vagina.
- You can start or resume regular hormonal contraceptive methods right after taking a progestin ECP.
- Ella is 1 pill that can be taken within 5 days after sperm has entered your vagina. It is more effective than progestin ECP on days 4 and 5 (73-120 hours) after sperm has entered your vagina. It is more expensive and you need a prescription to get it.
- After taking Ella, it's recommended to wait 5 days before starting or resuming a regular hormonal birth control. There may be exceptions to this though—you can ask your clinician about your specific situation when you get your prescription.
- ECPs can be taken up to 5 days after sperm has entered your vagina, but are more effective the sooner you take them.

- If you throw up or have diarrhea within an hour of taking ECP, call a pharmacy, PPT, or your healthcare provider to find out if you need to take another pill.
- ECPs do not protect you from pregnancy from sperm that enters your vagina after you take them.
- If you regularly use a non-hormonal form of birth control such as spermicides, condoms or diaphragms, you may want to purchase a progestin ECP or Ella in advance to have at home in case you need it. Remember to check the expiry date before using a progestin ECP or Ella.
- If you are already pregnant, taking an ECP will not end the pregnancy. ECPs are not abortion pills.

Where can I get an ECP?

- Progestin ECP is available over-the-counter, which means you don't need a prescription to buy it at a pharmacy. It usually costs around \$30-\$46 at a pharmacy.
- To get Ella, you need a prescription from a clinician. It costs around \$43-\$54 at a pharmacy.
- You can go to a sexual health clinic to get an ECP. You usually don't need an appointment (although you may need to speak briefly with a clinician) and they sell ECPs at a cheaper rate.
- PPT's Health Services sells progestin ECP for about \$13 (or pay-what-you-can), and Ella for about \$18.

What are the side effects of ECPs?

- Progestin ECPs and Ella have similar side effects. You may experience side effects such as nausea, vomiting, fatigue, cramping, headaches, breast/chest tenderness, or dizziness.
- You may have spotting (a little bit of bleeding that is lighter than your period) after taking an ECP. ECPs can make your period come earlier or later than usual. If you have not had a period within 3 weeks of taking an ECP or your period is different than usual, contact your clinician. You may need a pregnancy test.

Advantages of ECPs

- While no ECP is 100% effective, your chances of getting pregnant after using ECPs are low.
- ECPs are easy to use.
- Most people can use ECPs safely.