

Emergency Contraceptive Pill



Plan B, Ella, "The morning after pill"



What is the emergency contraceptive pill?

Emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs) are also commonly known as "the morning after pill" or by brand name, *Plan B*. ECPs offer a back-up method of birth control to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex or failed contraception. In Canada, there are two main types of ECP available: *Plan B* (levonorgestrel) and *ella* (ulipristal acetate).



How does it work?

The hormones in the emergency contraceptive pill work to prevent pregnancy in one of three ways. They either: prevent the egg from leaving the ovary, keep the sperm from meeting/fertilizing the egg, or by preventing a fertilized egg from attaching to the uterus. ECPs prevent pregnancy from occurring but do not cause a miscarriage or abortion. It will not affect an embryo if fertilization has already happened.



How do I use the emergency contraceptive pill?

- You should take the emergency contraceptive pill orally (by mouth) as soon as possible after unprotected sex or failed contraception during sex. ECPs are effective for up to 120 hours (5 days) after sex, but are most effective when taken as soon as possible.
- Follow the directions on the package. Most levonorgestrel ECPs (i.e. *Plan B* or the Generic equivalent) come with two pills. Take the first pill as soon as possible. You can take the second pill 12 hours later, or take them both at the same time if you wish. Ulipristal acetate ECPs (i.e. *Ella*) contain only one pill, to be taken as soon as possible.



Where can I get the emergency contraceptive pill? What is the cost?

- Anyone can purchase the levonorgestrel ECP (*Plan B*) at the pharmacy over the counter without a prescription (no health card or health insurance required). The price, depending on generic or brand-name, ranges from **\$22- \$37**. The ulipristal acetate ECP (*ella*) requires a prescription.
- You can get both types of ECP for **free** at the Acadia Student Health Centre. This will require an appointment with a doctor.
- The Red Door, a Youth Health and Support Centre in Kentville, offers Plan B to anyone aged 18-30 for **\$10** (Pay what you can option also available)



Are there any side effects?

You may experience some mild side effects for up to three days after taking the ECP. These include: nausea or vomiting, dizziness, fatigue, headache, breast tenderness, spotting, and cramping.



How effective is the emergency contraceptive pill?

- The effectiveness of the ECP in preventing pregnancy depends on how quickly you take it after unprotected sex: 0-24 hours after sex: 95% effective; 24-48 hours after sex: 85% effective; 49-72 hours after sex: 58% effective.
- Plan B and its generic equivalent may not work as well if you weigh over 176 pounds. However, ella, the prescription

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