

### What is EC?

*Emergency contraception* refers to contraception (birth control) that can be used to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex. There are several effective options available to you by prescription.

### Why should I use EC?

Half of all pregnancies in the US are not planned, and there is a 4-6% chance of pregnancy with each act of unprotected sex. This increases to a 30% chance if you have sex when you are ovulating. If you have sex without using birth control, you should think about emergency contraception to prevent pregnancy.

### When should I use EC?

Emergency contraception should be used as soon as possible, but some methods are effective up to five days after unprotected sex.

### What are my options?

#### ParaGard IUD

The ParaGard IUD is a copper T-shaped device that is inserted into the uterus within five days of unprotected sex. Copper is toxic to sperm, and the IUD may prevent implantation of a fertilized egg. A ParaGard IUD can be left in place for up to 12 years.



#### Ella (Ulipristal acetate)

Ella is a single pill that can be taken within 120 hours of unprotected sex. It prevents ovulation (release of egg). There is no data that suggests Ella harms an already-existing pregnancy. It is more effective than Plan B, especially if your BMI is > 25.



#### Plan B (Levonogestrel)

Plan B is a single pill that is available without a prescription at many pharmacies. It prevents ovulation. It is most effective if taken within 24 hours, but can be used up to 5 days after intercourse. **It is not effective if your BMI is >25 or you weigh more than 150 lbs.** Plan B does not harm an existing pregnancy.



#### Yuzpe Method (combination birth control pills)

The Yuzpe method involves taking multiple birth control pills within 72 hours of unprotected sex. It is 72% effective at preventing pregnancy. If you have birth control pills at home, you should talk to your doctor about this method.



## How effective is emergency contraception?

ParaGard	99.9% effective within 5 days
Ella	85% effective within 5 days
Plan B	52-94% effective within 72 hours
Yupze method	72% effective within 3 days

### What are the expected side effects?

If you use a pill method, you can expect some nausea and vomiting, delayed menses, irregular bleeding, abdominal pain, headache, breast tenderness, and fatigue. These should get better within 24 hours.

Side effects from the ParaGard IUD include cramping and bleeding. This will typically get better within 1-2 days. You may have changes in your periods with the IUD in place.

### Other Information

There are very few medical problems that make emergency contraception unsafe. Talk to your doctor about which method is best for you.

Oral EC does not cause an abortion or interfere with an existing pregnancy.

After using EC you should:

- 1. Start another method of birth control right away if you didn't get the IUD**
- 2. Come back to clinic in 2-3 weeks for a pregnancy test**

For more information, please visit these websites:

[www.larcfirst.com](http://www.larcfirst.com)

[www.choiceproject.wustl.edu](http://www.choiceproject.wustl.edu)

[www.bedsider.org](http://www.bedsider.org)