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EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION FACT SHEET

How does it work?

Emergency contraception (EC) contains the progestogen levonorgestrel. This is one of the hormones commonly found in the oral contraceptive pill (the 'Pill'). EC works in several ways to stop pregnancy before it starts. It works by either:

- Stopping or delaying your ovaries from releasing an egg;
- Preventing sperm from fertilising any egg you may have already released; or
- Stopping a fertilised egg from attaching itself to your womb lining.

Where can I get it?

From the 1st January 2004, EC became available for purchase from pharmacies without a prescription. Alternatively you can get it from your doctor or family planning centre.

When do I take it?

Each pack of EC contains 2 round, white pills. You must take the EC pills within 120 hours of having unprotected sex. The earlier EC is taken after unprotected sex, the more effective it is. EC will not protect you against STIs. Only condoms can do this. Ask your doctor for advice if you are worried that you may be at risk of contracting an STI.

How effective is it?

EC is more effective the sooner it is taken after unprotected sex. EC will prevent 95% of expected pregnancies if you take it in the first 24 hours, 85% between 25-48 hours and 58% if used between 49-72 hours. A recent study found that emergency contraception may still be effective (though to a lesser degree) in preventing pregnancy, when commenced up to 120 hours after intercourse. So act fast, and take it as soon as you can after having unprotected sex.

Will taking it make me sick?

Probably not but some girls may feel sick for a short time after taking EC. A few will actually be sick (vomit) after taking EC. If you do vomit, you should seek advice from your doctor or pharmacist as soon as possible

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How will it effect my next period?

Your next period might be different. Most girls will have a normal period at the expected time, but some may have their period later or earlier than usual. You might also have some irregular bleeding or spotting until your next period, tender breasts, headaches, tummy pain, diarrhoea, feel dizzy or feel tired. These symptoms should get better within a few days. If you are worried you should ask your doctor or pharmacist.

What if I take it and am pregnant, will it harm the baby?

There is no evidence that EC harms the foetus. **Emergency contraception** will not work if you are already pregnant.

How often can I take it?

Although there is no limit to the number of times you can take EC, it should be only used in an **EMERGENCY** and not as a regular form of contraception.

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