

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILLS (ECPs)

(Based on Contraceptive Technology 20th edition and Pocket Guide 2019-2020)

Effectiveness:

- Early start: 99.5-99.6%; Late start: 95.8-97.3%; Average: 96.8-98.9%

Mechanism: Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECPs) are a method women can use after sex to prevent an unplanned pregnancy after unprotected sexual intercourse or after a contraceptive “accident”. Emergency contraception, sometimes called the “morning-after pill,” consists of one or more of the same hormones found in ordinary birth control pills. When taken in a concentrated dosage within 120 hours after unprotected intercourse, these hormones can prevent pregnancy. **If you are already pregnant, ECPs will not harm the pregnancy.**

Advantages/Indications:

- Essential part of treatment following sexual assault for women who were not protected by an effective contraceptive method when the assault occurred.
- Use following contraceptive “accidents”, such as a condom slipped, broke or leaked or woman did not take contraceptive method as required to prevent pregnancy.
- Widespread availability of ECPs is contributing to a decrease in abortions.

Disadvantages/Risks:

- Nausea and vomiting: With combined estrogen-progestin, nausea occurs 50% time and vomiting 20%. Progestin has half the incidence in nausea and vomiting.
- About 10–15% of women report noticeable changes in menstrual flow. The next period may be early, on time or late. **If you do not have a period in 21 days return to the clinic/MD for a pregnancy test.**
- You may experience breast tenderness, fatigue, headache, abdominal pain or dizziness
- ECPs do not protect against sexually transmitted diseases during unprotected sex.

Instructions:

- Review this sheet carefully and discuss with your health department nurse or physician. Follow their instructions for the type of ECP provided.
- You must take the first dose within 120 hours of unprotected sexual intercourse and the second dose in 12 hours or take the entire dose at one time as directed by your healthcare provider.
- You may be advised to take a medicine to help with nausea 1 hour before the first ECP dose. The anti nausea medication may make you drowsy or sedated. Take precautions to protect yourself from an accident or injury.
- It is important for you to take a routine contraceptive method to prevent unintended pregnancy. Schedule an appointment for a family planning visit or request to start on birth control pills, Depo-Provera injections, contraceptive patch or ring today. You should use a barrier method, such as condom or foam, until you are on a routine method.