

# FACT SHEET : EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION PILL (EC PILL)

Remember,  
Emergency  
Contraception  
**does not protect  
you from Sexually  
Transmitted  
Infections or HIV.**  
Always use  
condoms to  
protect yourself!



## HOW DOES EC WORK?

- Progestin EC pills (Plan B One-Step®, Next Choice®, and others) contain a hormone like the ones your body makes. Ulipristal (ella®) mimics and blocks a hormone. EC pills stop your ovaries from releasing eggs. Without an egg, you cannot get pregnant.
- No method of birth control is 100% effective. EC pills lower the risk of pregnancy by 58-94%.
- If you take ella® within 5 days of having sex, it is 94% effective. Other EC pills are less effective. You can take EC pills up to 5 days after unprotected sex. Progestin EC pills work best the sooner you take them, but ella®, works just as well 4-5 days after sex as it does right after sex.
- Drug companies aren't good at making sure their medications work for people of all sizes. People with higher BMIs are often not included in these studies. So, progestin EC pills do not work as well if your body mass index is over 26. Ulipristal EC pills do not work as well if your body mass index is over 35.
- You can't use EC pills to end a pregnancy. They don't work if you are pregnant.

## HOW DO I USE EC PILLS?

- Take EC as soon as you can after unprotected sex. If your package has 2 pills, take both pills at the same time.

## HOW DO EC PILLS HELP ME?

- EC lowers your chance of getting pregnant after unprotected sex.

## HOW WILL I FEEL AFTER TAKING EC PILLS?

- You will most likely feel fine. EC has no long-term or severe side effects.
- You may have nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, breast pain, or belly pain for 1-2 days after taking the pills. To prevent nausea, you can take anti-nausea medicine (such as meclizine) one hour before you take EC.
- Your next period may come a few days early or a few days late. You may have spotting.

## DO EC PILLS HAVE RISKS?

- EC pills are very safe. There are no known risks.

## WHERE CAN I GET EC PILLS?

- EC is available at pharmacies, health centers, or from your clinician. Call ahead to see if they have it.
- You can get progestin EC without a prescription no matter how old you are.
- You can only get ella® with a prescription.
- You should always have EC on hand in case you need it. Ask for refills on your prescription.
- To get EC, ask your clinician, or visit <https://www.bedsider.org/clinics/ec>.

