

Don't Panic; This Is What To Do After Unprotected Sex!

Emergency contraception is a way to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex.



by **John-Bunya Klutse** February 4, 2018 in **Technology**

Woman taking contraceptive pill

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It's a nice Friday night and the young-bloods are out to have fun because it's TGIF!!! It just happens that we had way too much to drink or perhaps deliberately took in more than our bodies could handle. With the euphoria and sexually charged atmosphere, one can just imagine the likely outcome of the night... Some one night stand and to worsen the case there was no form of protection!!!

This is just one scenario of several hundreds where people who are not ready to cater for pregnancy or even think of bearing kids find themselves in tight corners after an episode of unprotected coitus (in "one corner")

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PHOTO: STOCKSY

Let me help defray your anxiety and fears by elaborating on **Emergency Contraception**. Please note these even before you go further.

1. Emergency Contraception will not protect you from HIV or other STDs
2. Emergency Contraception should not be used regularly as a constant form of pregnancy prevention. As the name suggests, it's for EMERGENCY... so if your emergency is every day, then you need a more longer lasting contraception.

With these two points understood, lets now learn about Emergency Contraception.

Emergency contraception is a way to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex. Often called the morning-after pill, emergency contraception pills (ECPs) are hormone pills that women can take after having unprotected intercourse.

There are different types of ECPs. One type, levonorgestrel (e.g. Lydia PostPil or Postinor 2), works best up to 72 hours after having unprotected sex but will reduce the risk of pregnancy if taken within 120 hours (5 days) after unprotected sex.

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Most ECPs in Ghana are levonorgestrel

The other type, ulipristal acetate, can be taken up to 5 days after unprotected intercourse. Unfortunately, Ulipristal is not available readily in Ghana.

Levonorgestrel ECPs are sold over-the-counter without a prescription or age requirement. Ulipristal can only be purchased with a prescription, regardless of a person's age.

The copper intrauterine device (IUD) can sometimes be used as a form of emergency contraception when inserted up to 5 days after unprotected sex. It works because the copper prevents sperm from swimming or functioning well. While more expensive than ECPs, an IUD is the most effective type of emergency contraception. It also can prevent future pregnancies for up to 12 years after insertion.

The Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP) is a form of contraception that women can use after unprotected sex. These questions and answers below are to help enlighten you about them:

What is the Emergency Contraception Pill (ECP)?

- The ECP is taken after unprotected sex to prevent pregnancy.
- It stops or delays the release of an egg from your ovaries until the guy's sperm aren't active in your body anymore.
- It prevents the sperm from fertilising an egg by changing the way the sperm moves in your body.
- It doesn't work once the egg has been fertilised.
- It doesn't harm you or a developing embryo.

When can I take the ECP?

The ECP is approved to be taken up to 72 hours after sex (three days). However, for most women, it is still effective up to four days after sex.

How effective is it?

- It has a success rate of 98% for women of average weight when taken within four days of unprotected sex.
- The ECP is not as effective for heavier women and these women would be better to have an IUD inserted. Women who weigh more than 70kg are classed as heavier women in this instance.
- Tell your doctor or pharmacist about any other medication you are taking as you may need extra ECPs or a copper IUD. If you vomit within three hours of taking the ECP you'll need to get another one.

- As stated already, An alternative method of emergency contraception is the copper IUD. It is inserted by a doctor or trained nurse up to five days after the egg is released, and it's almost 100% effective.
- It has the advantage of providing **long-term contraception** and being effective for heavier women.

Does the ECP have any side effects?

A few women have mild side effects e.g. feel sick or vomit. You can take the ECP with food to lessen the chance you will feel sick.

- There is a very small risk of an ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy outside the womb) if the ECP fails. This can occur with any pregnancy and can be dangerous. If you have cramping or bleeding, see a doctor, or go back to the clinic

If you think you could be pregnant, have a pregnancy test three to four weeks after you use the ECP.

Can I get the ECP in advance?

Yes, you can buy it from a chemist or get it from clinics or your doctor on prescription. You can have it at home just in case, and having it handy means you can take it as soon as you realise there is a problem.

What else should I know about the ECP?

- It contains progestogen, which is a very safe hormone.
- It doesn't make it harder for you to get pregnant later on.
- It's not harmful if you use it more than once.
- It won't cause an abortion if you are already pregnant.

Can I use the ECP as a regular method of contraception?

No. The ECP is not as effective as other contraceptive methods, doesn't protect you from sexually transmissible infections (**STIs**) and doesn't protect you from pregnancy for future sex, so it's unwise to use it as a regular method of contraception.

For professional help on this subject and other related topics contact **Dr. Frank Dartey** on Facebook. **Click here to Like and follow him.**