Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP)

If you have had unprotected intercourse and are interested in preventing pregnancy, read though this handout and be sure you understand the information provided. If you have any questions after reading the handout, please talk with a nurse or clinician.

Purpose of the Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP)
The ECP can be taken following unprotected intercourse to reduce your risk for an unwanted pregnancy. It consists of hormone pills that are taken within 72 hours (3 days) of the unprotected intercourse. The earlier it is taken, the more effective ECP is in preventing pregnancy. However, more recent research shows ECP may be effective even if used within 120 hours (5 days) of the unprotected intercourse. Please discuss this option with your clinician.

The ECP is to be used as an emergency measure only and not as a main method of birth control. ECP will not adversely affect a pregnancy that has already been established.

For more information about emergency contraception, go to www.not-2-late.com or call 888-NOT-2-LATE.

How ECP Works
ECP delays or inhibits ovulation by giving high doses of estrogen and/or progestin to alter the hormone cycle. To a lesser extent, ECP may inhibit implantation of a fertilized egg in the uterus or may interfere with the transport of sperm or an egg through the female reproductive tract.

Contraindications to ECP Use
- Current pregnancy
- History of unexplained vaginal bleeding
- Allergy to Plan B or Preven

Dosing Instructions
If you have obtained Plan B for emergency contraception, you need to take both tablets as you have been instructed or according to package directions.

If you are planning to use another brand of medication for emergency contraception, follow the dosing instructions provided to you by your health care provider.

You should notify your provider if you were not able to complete taking ECP as directed.

Pregnancy Testing
Pregnancy testing is not usually indicated prior to taking ECP. However, inform your health care provider if your menstrual cycles have been unusual or abnormal.

Your health care provider may also request that you have a pregnancy test performed if you have not experienced a period or vaginal bleeding with 14 days of taking ECP.

Most Common Side Effects of ECP
- Nausea and/or Vomiting: If vomiting occurs within one hour of taking an ECP dose, call for further instructions.
- Headache
- Breast tenderness
- Fatigue
- Menstrual cycle changes

Treating Nausea and Vomiting
- ECP containing progestin alone is not usually associated with nausea or vomiting. Discuss prevention options with your healthcare provider.

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Take each ECP dose with food and milk. Food and milk will help reduce the risk of nausea.

Concern about Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI)
ECP only prevents pregnancy, not STIs. You should schedule an appointment for STI testing at the student health service if this is a concern.

Birth Control Options
- An effective birth control method must be used for the remainder of the cycle when engaging in intercourse.
- Prescription birth control methods may be obtained by scheduling an appointment at the student health service.
- Many over-the-counter birth control methods are available at local pharmacies.
- Further information is available upon request.

Symptoms to Report Immediately
If you develop any of the following symptoms soon after taking ECP, report them immediately to the student health service, or if severe, go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call 911. These symptoms are rare but could indicate a potentially life-threatening condition.
- Sudden severe pain or swelling in the legs, calf, thigh, or groin
- Sudden severe abdominal pain
- Sudden severe chest pain, coughing up blood, or difficulty breathing
- Sudden changes in vision such as blurring or loss of vision or difficulty speaking
- Sudden severe headache, dizziness, weakness, numbness, or fainting
- Jaundice (yellow color change to the skin or whites of the eyes)

Contact the student health service:
- If you have symptoms of serious side effects
- If vomiting occurs within one hour of taking either dose of ECP
- If you do not have a period within 3 weeks of taking ECP
- If you are interested in scheduling an appointment for prescribed contraception or STI testing

If your need is urgent, and the student health service is closed, go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call 911 for an ambulance.