

# UniversityHealthServices

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## EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILL (ECP)

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

### Purpose of the Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP)

The ECP is taken following unprotected intercourse to reduce your risk for an unwanted pregnancy. It consists of hormone pills that must be taken within 120 hours (5 days) of the unprotected intercourse. **The earlier it is taken, the more effective ECP is in preventing pregnancy.** The ECP is to be used as an emergency measure only and not as a main method of birth control. ECP is not effective if a pregnancy is already established.

### How ECP Works

ECP delays or inhibits ovulation by giving high doses of estrogen and/or progesterin 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 PlanB or Preven

### Dosing Instructions

If you have been prescribed Plan B for emergency contraception, you may either take both tabs now (as 1 dose) or 1 tab now and 1 tab in 12 hours (2 doses). Both ways have been shown to be effective without a significant increase in side effects.

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.

### Pregnancy Testing

A pregnancy test may be indicated prior to using ECP. **If the test is positive, DO NOT** use ECP. A confirmed pregnancy is a contraindication for ECP use, as ECP will not interfere with an established pregnancy. A pregnancy test kit is recommended and is available at the University Health Services pharmacy and at local drug stores. Testing may also be done as part of your health care visit.

### 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

- One tablet of Bonine taken by mouth one hour before the first dose of ECP may reduce the risk of nausea and vomiting. If necessary, Bonine may be taken again after 24 hours, per package instructions.
- 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 by calling UHS at 863-0774.

### **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 in Women's Health.
- Many over-the-counter birth control methods are available at local pharmacies, including the pharmacy at University Health Services.
- 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 Women's Health, Urgent Care, or the nearest hospital. 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

### **Contact Clinical Services for an appointment (863-0774) or the UHS Advice Nurse (863-4463):**

- 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

### **Test Results and Advice Nurse**

Please call the nurse for test results and advice: 863-4463

### **Appointments**

Appointments can be made in person or by phone. If you are unable to keep your appointment, please call and cancel. Otherwise you will be charged for the visit.

To schedule or cancel appointments, call: 863-0774.

**For more information about health care issues, visit the UHS Web site at [www.sa.psu.edu/uhs](http://www.sa.psu.edu/uhs)**

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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