Emergency Contraception After Sexual Assault

Hospitals in Pennsylvania that provide emergency services to sexual assault victims are required to talk to you about emergency contraception, tell you it is available, explain its effectiveness and side effects, and give it to you if you ask for it, unless there is a medical reason not to take it.

Hospitals that have a religious or moral objection to providing emergency contraception are required to talk with you about emergency contraception and arrange to transport you, at no cost, to a location where you can obtain emergency contraception, if you request it.

Key Facts for Survivors

- Emergency contraception is back-up birth control that lowers your risk of getting pregnant after sexual assault.
- Emergency contraception can work up to five days after unprotected sex, but it works best when you take it as soon as possible.
- Emergency contraception is safe and effective.
- Millions of women have safely used emergency contraception to prevent unintended pregnancies for over 40 years.
- Emergency contraception does not harm an existing pregnancy.
- Emergency contraception does not affect your ability to get pregnant in the future.
- Emergency contraception can lower your chance of getting pregnant by 80-90 percent.

How Emergency Contraception Works

- Emergency contraception prevents an egg from leaving the ovary or by keeping the sperm away from the egg.
- Emergency contraception cannot stop a fertilized egg from attaching to the lining of the uterus.
- Emergency contraception is not the abortion pill and it will not end an existing pregnancy or cause an abortion or miscarriage.

Side effects of Emergency Contraception may include:

- Nausea and vomiting;
- Breast tenderness;
- Headache; and
- Dizziness

If you vomit within two hours of taking emergency contraception, call a doctor. You may have to take the pill again.

Although your chances of pregnancy as a result of sexual assault will be greatly reduced if you take emergency contraception, you may want to make an appointment with your health care provider to provide a pregnancy test in about two weeks.
If your period is more than one week late, you may be pregnant. Contact your health care provider for a follow-up appointment.

There are two types of emergency contraception pills that are approved for use by the Federal Drug Administration.

1. Progestin-Only Pills (Plan B One-Step and Next Choice One Dose):
   - Works best when taken within three days of unprotected sex but can still help to prevent pregnancy up to five days after unprotected sex;
   - Will not end or hurt a current pregnancy; and
   - May not work as well if you weigh more than 154 pounds.

Note: Progestin-only emergency contraception is available at pharmacies, without a prescription, for women of all ages.

2. Ella (ulipristal acetate):
   - Works best when taken within five days of unprotected sex;
   - Should not be taken by women who are pregnant or breastfeeding;
   - Is only available with a prescription; and
   - May not work as well if you weigh more than 193 pounds.

Notes:

DON’T WAIT! Take emergency contraception as soon as possible after unprotected sex

To fully protect yourself after using emergency contraception, back up your regular birth control method with another method such as condoms.

Emergency contraception does not protect you from sexually transmitted infections. A condom is recommended to be used for protection against these infections.

Check with your treating physician or pharmacist to discuss any concerns regarding drug interactions. Ask what medication you received or look at your patient discharge instructions.

Paying for Emergency Contraception:

Pennsylvania’s Victims Compensation Assistance Program can cover the cost of emergency contraception when you receive it during the rape exam. Talk to the advocate from the rape crisis center for more information or call the program at 1-800-233-2339 or go to www.pccd.pa.gov/Victim-Services.

For support and information, at any time, day or night, contact your local rape crisis center at 1-888-772-7227.

Additional EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION Resources:


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Source: Oregon Health Authority and Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals: http://www.arhp.org/ec
http://www.pcar.org/pregnancy