

HENRY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
Family Planning Program

Client Information Fact Sheet
EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILLS (ECPs)-Plan B

Emergency contraceptive pill (ECP) is a hormonal pill (similar to birth control pills) that you take to try to prevent pregnancy after you have unprotected vaginal intercourse. Either your birth control method failed (for example your condom broke), or you missed 2 or more pills, or you didn't use a method. ECPs are commonly referred to as the "morning after" pill.

ECP is **not** RU 486, will **not** cause an abortion, will **not** prevent sexually transmitted diseases, and is **not** a form of regular birth control.

The sooner ECP is taken, the better it works to prevent pregnancy. It is best to take the pill within 72 hours (3 days) of unprotected vaginal intercourse. When taken within the first 72 hours after intercourse, emergency contraception pills prevent pregnancy about 75-89% of the time. Studies have shown that even if ECPs are taken as late as 120 hours (5 days) after unprotected intercourse they may prevent pregnancy. They appear to be less effective the later they are used.

ECPs are FDA approved. When you get your pill, you should always get a copy of the FDA information. You should read the information and ask questions about anything you do not understand. **Always follow instructions as given by your provider.**

You should not use ECP if you are (or think you are) already pregnant. However, *if you are pregnant, or if the ECP fail and pregnancy occurs*, it may help you to know that there have not been any reports of serious side effects to the woman or to the fetus from taking the pills.

Some reactions to this pill (for about 24 hours) may include:

- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Breast tenderness
- Irregular vaginal bleeding
- Headache or dizziness

After taking ECPs, changes with menstrual cycle may occur. Follow specific instructions as given by the family planning medical provider.

Having unprotected sex may have put you at risk for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)/HIV. If you think you could be at risk for STDs/HIV, you should talk to your clinician about getting tested.

Call the family planning clinic if you:

- Have questions
- Think you have a problem or that you might be pregnant
- Miss your period

Ask your clinician about available methods (i.e. birth control pills, shots, devices) for preventing pregnancy in the future.

For additional information on ECPs, contact:

- DHS Helpline: 1/800-843-6154
- ECP Hotline: 1/888/668-2528
- Henry County Health Dept.: 1-309-852-5272

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NOTE: If you are 17 years of age or older, Plan B should be available without a prescription from your local pharmacy. You must ask the pharmacist and show a government issued ID.