

Emergency Contraception (EC)

Family Planning Services of Lorain County 440-322-7526

What is EC?

EC is emergency contraception. Also known as the “morning-after pill,” it is a pill you can take to prevent pregnancy **after** you’ve had sex.

There are several different types of EC pills available, including:

- ella®: one pill containing 30 mg of a progesterone receptor modulator called ulipristal acetate
- Plan B One-Step®: 1 pill containing 1.5 mg of a progesterone-type drug called levonorgestrel
- Next Choice®: 2 pills containing 0.75 mg of levonorgestrel each
- Next Choice One Dose® : 1 pill containing 1.5mg of a progesterone-type drug called levonorgestrel
- Levonorgestrel generic: 1.5mg of a progesterone-type drug called levonorgestrel

*A copper IUD (ParaGard®) is another form of emergency contraception.

When should I use EC?

- You had sex without using any type of birth control (this applies to cases of rape)
- You used a condom, but you think it broke or fell off during sex
- You used a diaphragm, and you noticed a hole in it
- You used a diaphragm, but not correctly
- You forgot to take your birth control pills for more than 1 day and had sex without other protection, like a condom and spermicide
- You had sex when you think your birth control method was not used 100 percent correctly

How effective is EC?

If EC is taken within 120 hours or 5 days of unprotected sex, you will reduce your risk of pregnancy by 80 to 95 percent if you use progesterone-only pills (Plan B One-Step® or Next Choice®) or ulipristal acetate (ella®). If you have a ParaGard® IUD placed within 5 days of unprotected sex, you will reduce your risk of pregnancy by more than 99 percent.

EC is not 100 percent effective, but it is **more** effective the sooner it is used. When taken more than 72 hours after unprotected sex, ella® is more effective than Plan B One-Step® or Next Choice®. If you are overweight or obese, ella® is likely more effective than Plan B One-Step® or Next Choice®. The most effective form of EC is the ParaGard® IUD. Additionally, this form of EC prevents pregnancy for at least 10 years.

If you do become pregnant, EC pills will not affect the pregnancy. EC pills do not hurt the pregnancy or increase the chance of the pregnancy being abnormal. If you become pregnant after a ParaGard® IUD is placed for EC, call your doctor immediately to have the IUD removed.

How does EC work?

EC works by slowing down the release of an egg from a woman’s ovary. Pregnancy cannot happen if there is no egg to join with sperm. EC can also prevent a fertilized egg from attaching itself to the wall of the uterus. Emergency contraception works before pregnancy has occurred.

The ParaGard® IUD also makes it more difficult for sperm to reach an egg, and may also change the lining of the uterus, making it harder for a pregnancy to take hold.

You might have heard that Emergency Contraception pills cause an abortion. But that's not true. EC is **not** the abortion pill. Emergency contraception is **birth control**, not [abortion](#). EC pills will not harm an established pregnancy.

Who should not take EC?

- You should not take any forms of EC if:
 - You have had abnormal vaginal bleeding that has not been checked by a doctor
 - You are allergic to the contents in the pills
- You should not take ella® if:
 - You are breastfeeding (**If you desire to use ella® and wish to continue breastfeeding, you may pump and discard your milk for one week, and then resume normal breastfeeding at that point)
- You should not use a ParaGard® IUD for emergency contraception if:
 - You have Wilson's Disease, or are allergic to copper
 - You currently have an pelvic infection

How do I get EC?

You can buy Plan B One-Step® or Next Choice® without a prescription if you are 17 years old or older. If you are younger than 17 years old, you will need a prescription from your doctor. Be sure to bring identification with you. Not all drug stores have EC pills. It may be stored behind the counter so you will need to ask for it at the pharmacy. If you wish to use the brand name, ella®, you will need a prescription from your doctor.

To get the ParaGard® IUD, you will need to see your doctor to have the IUD placed in the office.

If you vomit within 3 hours after taking EC, call Family Planning. You may need to repeat the dose.

Are there side effects?

You may have some minor side effects that usually go away within a day or 2. If any of these minor side effects do not go away after 2 days, call your doctor.

Side Effects	Serious Side Effects: Call Family Planning
Nausea	Severe lower belly (abdominal) pain
Vomiting	Severe chest pain or shortness of breath
Breast tenderness	Cough up blood
Slight headache	Severe headache
Tiredness	Severe leg pain
	Eye problems like blurred vision, flashing lights, or blindness

Follow-up

- Talk to your nurse practitioner about a follow-up appointment.
- Your period may start earlier or later than usual.
- If you do not get your period within the next 3 weeks, take a pregnancy test.
- If you are sexually active, use another type of birth control, like condoms and spermicide. EC will help prevent pregnancy only for sex that has already taken place within the past 120 hours (5 full days of 24 hours each). The ParaGard® IUD will prevent pregnancy with future intercourse.
- You will need to wait 5 days from taking ella® before starting a new hormonal birth control option
- You may start a new method of hormonal birth control beginning the next day after completing Plan B One-Step® or Next Choice®.
- If there's even a small chance that you may have been exposed to STDs (sexually transmitted diseases), tell your nurse practitioner you want to be tested.