**Emergency contraception**

**Presented by**

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Introduction

Emergency contraception, or emergency birth control, is used to help keep a woman from getting pregnant *after* she has had sex without using [birth control](http://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/birth-control-methods.html) or if the birth control method failed. Emergency contraception should not be used as regular birth control. Other birth control methods are much better at keeping women from becoming pregnant. Talk with your doctor to decide which one is right for you. There are two types Emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs) and intrauterine device (IUD). The ECP is most effective when taken in the first 24 hours after unprotected intercourse. If taken within three days of unprotected intercourse the ECP will prevent approximately 85% of expected pregnancies. Remember, it is not 100% effective at preventing an unintended pregnancy. The ECP is more effective the sooner it is taken after unprotected sex. It can be taken up to five days after unprotected sex. It is safe to use the ECP more than once in a cycle.

ECPs are very safe to use with no serious or long-lasting side-effects. Some women have experienced an irregular period after taking the ECP and a few may have nausea or breast tenderness.

If vomiting occurs less than two hours after you take the ECP, you should take another dose. If vomiting occurs MORE than two hours after taking it, there is no need to take another dose.

The IUD works by keeping the sperm from joining the egg or keeping a fertilized egg from attaching to the uterus. Your doctor can remove the IUD after your next period. Or, it can be left in place for up to 10 years to use as your regular birth control method.

IUD placement has risks of pelvic infection or harming the uterus. But these risks are quite rare. If the IUD is left in place to be used as birth control, it can cause side effects such as cramps and heavy bleeding during your period.