

# The facts about Emergency Contraception

Auckland Sexual Health Service  
Free phone 0800 739 432

## Emergency Contraception

### Why may I need to use emergency contraception?

If you have sexual intercourse and you do not use contraception you may become pregnant. You may also need emergency contraception if you have missed pills or a condom breaks.

### What is the emergency contraceptive pill (ECP)?

- The ECP is a high dose contraceptive pill containing a hormone called progesterone.
- It is thought that the ECP stops pregnancy by preventing the release of an egg from the ovary. It may also cause changes in the lining of the uterus (womb) that discourages implantation of a fertilised egg.
- The ECP can be taken up to 5 days following unprotected sexual intercourse.
- The ECP prevents the majority of pregnancies and is most effective if taken within 24 hours.
- The ECP can be used at any time during the menstrual cycle
- If the unprotected sex occurred more than 5 days ago it is advisable to talk to your healthcare professional as there may be other options.

### How do I take them?

- Take both tablets together as soon as possible. It helps to take them with food as some women feel sick after taking the ECP
- If you vomit within three hours of taking the pills, you should return to your health care provider as you may need to take them again.
- If you are already using a regular method of contraception such as the oral contraceptive pill continue to take this at your regular time

### What happens next?

- Some women may experience bleeding or spotting after taking the ECP and some may experience an early or later start to the next menstrual period.
- It is important to have a pregnancy test 3 to 4 weeks after taking the ECP to ensure that you are not pregnant even if you have a period.
- There is no evidence that the ECP will affect the unborn baby if you do become pregnant.

### Future contraception

- The ECP does not give you any ongoing protection against pregnancy.
- It is important to use condoms or another form of contraception for ongoing protection against pregnancy. You can talk to your health professional about this as using ECP as a regular method of birth control is not recommended.

### Sexually transmitted infections

- Emergency contraception does not protect you against sexually transmitted infections.
- You can arrange a check up at Auckland Sexual Health Service two weeks after you have had unprotected sex.