



## Emergency Contraception

# Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q** WHAT IS EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION?

Emergency contraception is used to prevent pregnancy after sex occurs without any birth control. It is used when something goes wrong—a condom breaks, you forget to take even 1 birth control pill, your ring falls out for more than 3 hours—or anytime you have unprotected sex.

Plan B is made of 2 tablets containing levonorgestrel, the same progestin hormone that has been used in many birth control pills for more than 35 years. It prevents pregnancy mainly by stopping the release of an egg from the ovary and may also work by preventing a fertilized egg from attaching to the uterus (womb). Plan B will not affect a fertilized egg already attached to the uterus.

### **Q** HOW EFFECTIVE IS IT?

Emergency contraception lowers the risk of becoming pregnant after unprotected sex. It should be used within 120 hours (5 days) after unprotected sex. The sooner you take it, the more effective it will be. When taken as directed, it can reduce the risk of pregnancy after unprotected sex by 85%. That means that 7 of 8 women who would have become pregnant will not get pregnant.

### **Q** WHAT HAPPENS IF IT DOESN'T WORK?

If emergency contraception does not work, you may become pregnant. If you do become pregnant, Plan B will not affect the developing pregnancy. After taking Plan B, if you do not get your period within 3 weeks or if your period is lighter than normal, you should take a pregnancy test.

## Q WHAT SIDE EFFECTS CAN I EXPECT?

You may experience nausea after taking Plan B. If you vomit within 1 hour after taking a pill, call your health care professional to find out if you should repeat a dose. You may also experience breast tenderness, bloating, or tiredness. Your next period may be heavier or lighter than normal; it may also come earlier or later.

## Q HOW DO I GET EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION?

Plan B is available to any man or woman aged 18 or older without a prescription in pharmacies or in clinics/offices with a licensed health care provider. You may be asked to provide proof of age. Women aged 17 years or younger need a prescription.

## Q HOW DO I TAKE IT?

There are 2 levonorgestrel tablets in each pack of Plan B. The FDA-approved package insert instructs you to take 1 tablet as soon as possible and the second tablet 12 hours later. Alternatively, you can just take both tablets at the same time. Studies have shown that both treatments work the same and have the same side effects. As you can imagine, it is much easier just to take both pills at the same time.

## FAST FACTS about Plan B



- **Plan B is available without a prescription in the United States to anyone** (male or female) aged 18 years or older with proof of age. Women aged 17 years or younger will need a prescription.
- **Plan B is an emergency contraceptive that can prevent a pregnancy.** You should use it anytime you have sex without birth control—if a condom breaks, if you forget to take birth control pills at anytime during a cycle, if your ring falls out for more than 3 hours, or anytime you are unsure if you are protected.
- **Plan B should be taken as soon as possible after unprotected sex** but within 5 days (120 hours). The sooner you take Plan B, the more effective it is. You can take both tablets at once or take the first tablet as soon as possible and the second tablet 12 hours after the first tablet.
- **Plan B should not be used as regular birth control** because it is not as effective as other forms of birth control.
- **Plan B is not the same as mifepristone**, the medication used for medical abortion.