



Leaflet: Emergency Contraception -Hormo

Emergency Contraception -Hormonal

Emergency contraception can be used if intercourse occurs without contraception, or if there is a mistake with contraception. Examples of mistakes with contraception are a split condom or a cap removed too early. This method is for emergencies only and is not reliable enough to be used on a regular basis.

What is it?

It is two special doses of the combined pill containing the same hormones but at a higher dose. It works by either preventing or postponing ovulation or by preventing the fertilised egg from settling in the womb.

When should it be taken?

It must be started within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse. Usually two tablets are taken as soon as possible after intercourse and then a further two are taken 12 hours later.

How effective is it?

It is quite effective (only 1 to 5 out of 100 women who use this will become pregnant). Some reasons for the method failing include the following:

- ◆ Treatment is given more than 72 hours after intercourse.
- ◆ When unprotected intercourse has occurred at anytime earlier in the menstrual cycle.
- ◆ Vomiting within 3 hours of taking the tablets. If vomiting occurs after taking the tablets then seek advice from a doctor.
- ◆ Not remembering to take the second two tablets.
- ◆ Not using contraception after the treatment is given.

Are there any risks or side effects?

There is still a small risk of pregnancy. The possibility of the pregnancy being harmed by the hormones taken cannot be completely ruled out, but it is believed to be extremely unlikely.

Nausea (feeling sick) may occur lasting up to 24-36 hours. Sometimes the breasts are possibly slightly more tender than usual. Some women have a small withdrawal bleed when the treatment is finished. This is not a normal period and it is important that contraception is continued for the rest of the menstrual cycle and afterwards.

Do discuss future contraception with your doctor or practice nurse. Seek medical advice if your next period is late but it is common for the next period to be several days late.

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