

# EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILL

## WHAT IS AN EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILL?

The emergency contraceptive pill (ECP), or the “morning after pill”, is used to prevent or reduce the chance of an unplanned pregnancy after unprotected sex.

There are different brands of this pill. Plan B is one common brand of ECP. It contains a high dose of the hormone progestin (Levonorgestrel). Plan B is available at York Region Sexual Health Clinics and available from most pharmacies at a cost without a prescription.

A prescription is required if you want to access free emergency contraception using OHIP+ (for people under 25 years of age) from a pharmacy.

### HOW IT WORKS

- Temporarily stops ovulation (the release of an egg from the ovary)
- May prevent a fertilized egg from attaching to the uterus

If Plan B fails to prevent pregnancy from occurring, it has not been shown to have any harmful effects on a developing fetus.

### EFFECTIVENESS

- The sooner Plan B or another brand of ECP is taken, the more effective it is; if taken within 24 hours of unprotected sex, it can prevent up to 95 percent of pregnancies
- If taken within 48 to 72 hours, it can prevent up to 61 per cent of pregnancies
- There is some evidence Plan B is less effective in people with higher body mass index (BMI's)

### WHEN TO CONSIDER PLAN B

- Birth control was not used
- Contraception was missed or taken late
- When a condom broke, leaked, or slipped off, or when an IUD/IUS accidentally came out
- When non-consensual sexual intercourse occurred (sexual assault)

### WHAT PLAN B WON'T DO

- Interrupt a pregnancy from a previous act of unprotected intercourse
- Protect you from pregnancy for the rest of your cycle
- Protect you from STI's

**The emergency contraceptive pill does not protect you from STI's.** Always use a condom from beginning to end of all sexual contact to reduce your risk or get tested after unprotected sex for early detection of STIs.

### **POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS**

You may experience nausea, irregular bleeding or spotting, breast tenderness, headache, stomach pain, cramping, fatigue and/or diarrhea. These are usually temporary side effects and resolve on their own.

### **WHAT YOU MAY EXPECT AFTER TAKING PLAN B**

You may experience irregular bleeding or spotting that is not a menstrual period.

Your next period may occur at the same time or be delayed. If your next period is more than one week late or if it is different from normal, you should complete a pregnancy test and follow-up with the sexual health clinic or another health care provider.

### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE**

- Take Plan B as soon as possible following unprotected sex or a failed birth control incident
- Plan B may be taken with food
- If you vomit within two hours after taking Plan B, another dose may be needed. Call the York Region sexual health clinic information and appointment line, your health care provider or go to a walk-in clinic or pharmacy for medical advice

### **EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION**

Emergency contraception is intended only for occasional use and not as a regular method of birth control.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- Emergency contraception [sexandu.ca](http://sexandu.ca)
- York Region Public Health Sexual Health Clinics **1-800-361-5653, #1**
- Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada [itsaplan.ca](http://itsaplan.ca)