Types of Emergency Contraception

Emergency contraception (sometimes called emergency contraceptives, EC, or the ‘morning-after pill’) refers to a number of methods used to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex or contraceptive failure. EC prevents a pregnancy from occurring. It does not disrupt an existing pregnancy. Read on to learn more about the different types of EC and how you can obtain them.

**Plan B One-Step® & its generics**

- **What it is:** Plan B One-Step® and its generics are a single pill made of the hormone levonorgestrel. The pill is effective at preventing pregnancy up to three days (72 hours) after unprotected sex or contraceptive failure.

- **How to get it:** Plan B One-Step® and its generics are approved for over-the-counter (OTC) sale for people of all ages, meaning you don’t need a prescription to buy them. Plan B One-Step® and some of its generics (Take Action®, Next Choice One-Dose®, My Way®, Aftera®, and Fallback Solo®) can be found at most major pharmacies or retail stores, normally in the family planning aisle. They can also be found at some family planning clinics or student health centers. EContra™ EZ is a low-cost generic available only at certain health clinics or campus health centers. Many levonorgestrel EC products can also be ordered on the internet, either at online drug stores, Amazon, Afterpill, or a number of other online platforms. People 16 and older can safely take any form of EC. Before April 30, 2016 however, some generic labels were required to indicate that the product is intended for use by women ages 17 and older. These generics are no longer required to reference age on the box, although some packages with the older labeling may remain in stock. At a retail store an ID check is never required for the purchase of Plan B One-Step® and its generics, though some online retailers only sell their products to customers above a certain age.

- **Cost:** Plan B One-Step® and its generics usually cost $25-$60 when purchased off retail store shelves. Generally speaking, most private insurers are required to cover the cost of OTC EC if you have a prescription for it. Without a prescription, however, they are generally not required to cover the cost. Some states are beginning to require some insurers to cover the cost with or without a prescription. If you have Medicaid, OTC EC coverage depends on your state. In some states, your pharmacist may even be able to write this prescription themselves, saving you a trip to a provider. Ask the pharmacist if they can do so. Be aware that some online retailers do not accept insurance. If you do not have insurance, some clinics offer these products at low- to no-cost.

**ella® (ulipristal acetate)**

- **What it is:** ella® is a single EC pill made of ulipristal acetate. It is safe and effective at preventing pregnancy up to five days (120 hours) after unprotected sex or contraceptive failure.

- **How to get it:** Though there is no age restriction, ella® requires a prescription from a health care provider (pharmacists may prescribe ella® in certain states). Since it is a prescription product, it is not available on store shelves and must be picked up at the pharmacy counter. Some family planning clinics may stock ella® on-site, eliminating the need to visit a pharmacy. Alternatively, ella® can be ordered from a few websites that have the authority to both write a prescription and dispense the medication. Again, insurance coverage, age restrictions, and ID requirements may vary from site to site.
• **Cost:** The average cost of ella® is approximately $59, but most private and public insurances should cover it. Some online ella® retailers do not accept insurance. If you do not have health insurance, ella® is available at a discounted rate at many family planning clinics.

**ParaGard® (copper IUD)**

• **What it is:** ParaGard® is an intrauterine device (IUD) that is made of copper and does not contain hormones. It can be used for routine contraception (to prevent pregnancy before unprotected sex or contraceptive failure) or as EC (to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex or contraceptive failure). When inserted within five days (120 hours) of unprotected sex or contraceptive failure, it reduces a person's risk of pregnancy to one in 1,000, making it the most effective form of EC available. Unlike other forms of EC, the copper IUD can remain an effective form of birth control for up to 10-12 years after insertion.

• **How to get it:** ParaGard® is not available OTC and must be inserted into the uterus by a licensed health care professional.

• **Cost:** Without insurance ParaGard® can cost up to $1,000 for the device and associated medical costs. However, it should be covered by most private and public insurance plans and some clinics offer it at a discounted price for those without insurance.

**Oral contraceptives & the Yuzpe method**

• **What it is:** With the Yuzpe method, you can use certain brands of combination oral contraceptives (birth control pills that contain both estrogen and progestin) as EC. Depending on the particular medication, a double or triple dose of the pills will prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex or contraceptive failure. Although the package labeling does not include this information, the US Food & Drug Administration has approved 18 brands of oral contraceptives as safe for use as EC. See these helpful guides from Bedsider and the International Consortium for Emergency Contraception for more information on the Yuzpe method.

• **How to get it:** Within the US, oral contraceptives can only be obtained with a prescription from a health care provider (including a pharmacist in some states). You can pick up the pills at pharmacies, online, and at some family planning clinics and student health centers.

• **Cost:** Without insurance, the out-of-pocket costs of oral contraceptives usually range from $10-$50 per month depending on where they are obtained. Under the Affordable Care Act, oral contraceptives should be fully covered by most private insurers. Oral contraceptives are fully covered under Medicaid as well.

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*If you need are in need of EC, please visit Bedsider’s EC locator to find the location nearest you.*

*If you do not have health insurance but need affordable EC, contact your local Title X provider for more information.*

*For more information about minor’s access to contraception, please visit the Guttmacher Institute.*