Key facts about

Emergency Contraception

Emergency contraception is a way to prevent pregnancy after sex.

Consider prescribing emergency contraception if a woman:

- didn't use a contraceptive during sex, or
- thinks her contraceptive didn't work.

Two options: pills or IUD insertion.

Emergency Contraceptive Pills

- Plan B™ progestin-only pills
- Preven™ estrogen/progestin pills
- High doses of regular oral contraceptive pills

IUD

- Copper T IUD
- Inserted within **5 days** of unprotected intercourse
- Offers ongoing contraceptive protection

Pills should be started within 72 hours (three days) after unprotected sex.

Emergency contraceptive pills require two doses:

- First dose within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse
- Second dose 12 hours after the first dose

Emergency contraceptive pills are more effective the sooner they are taken.

Safe and effective.

- Progestin-only pills reduce the risk of pregnancy by 89%.*
- Combined estrogen/progestin pills reduce the risk of pregnancy by 75%.*
- For regular, long-term use, most other contraceptive methods are more effective.
- Emergency contraceptive pills do not protect against sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

**Pregnancy risk reduction based on one-time use. If emergency contraceptive pills were used as a regular method, their effectiveness would be substantially lower.*

Won't cause an abortion.

- Emergency contraceptive pills are **NOT** the same as RU-486 (the abortion pill).
- Emergency contraceptive pills are not effective once implantation has begun; they cannot interrupt an established pregnancy.

Won't harm a developing fetus.

- If emergency contraceptive pills are taken inadvertently during pregnancy, they will not harm the developing fetus.
- Using emergency contraceptive pills will not affect a woman's ability to become pregnant in the future.

Women can keep pills at home in case of emergency.

- Many women find it convenient to have emergency contraceptive pills on hand in case of an emergency.
- Medical providers can provide emergency contraceptive pills before they are needed.
- Many pharmacies in Washington can prescribe emergency contraceptive pills. Call 1-888-NOT-2-LATE (1-888-668-2528) or visit www.not-2-late.com.

Washington State Department of Health

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Health Education Resource Exchange Web Team

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