

Emergency Hormonal Contraception Advice

There are two types of emergency hormonal contraception (EHC) Ulipristal® Acetate (UPA-EC known as EllaOne) and Levonorgestrel 1500® (LNG-EC).

How do they work?

Both types of pill delay or prevent ovulation (egg release) if taken in the first half of the menstrual cycle, UPA-EC can have this effect for slightly longer in the cycle than LNG-EC. Sperm can survive in the reproductive system for 5-7 days so delaying ovulation can allow time for the sperm to become inactive before the egg is released.

How effective are they?

EllaOne's effectiveness continues at the same level for 5 days.

Levonorgestrel's effectiveness declines over 3 days.

The sooner after unprotected sex you take the medication, the more effective it will be.

How are they taken?

They both come as a single dose tablet.

Can weight/height BMI make EHC less effective?

Effectiveness of LNG-EC may become less for those with higher weight or BMI and double dose of LNG-EC may be given.

Post bariatric surgery, both EHC will become less effective.

Are there any side effects?

Side effects are uncommon. The most common side effects are abdominal pain, uterine cramps, irregular vaginal bleeding and pre-menstrual syndrome. You may also get headaches, feel sick and have breast tenderness.

You may feel sick after taking the tablet. If you vomit within 3 hours of taking the tablet, you will need to obtain a further supply.

Can medications make EHC less effective?

Please let your doctor/nurse/pharmacists know what medications you are taking including those you buy from over the counter. Some of these medications can make EHC less effective.

Are there any medical conditions which can make me unsuitable for taking EHC?

Please let your doctor/nurse/pharmacist know if you have uncontrolled asthma and you are taking oral steroids. UPA-EC will not be suitable then.

Can I breastfeed after taking EHC?

You can breastfeed if you have taken LNG-EC.

If you have taken UPA-EC then do not breastfeed for 1 week, express and discard this milk.

Will it affect my period?

Your next period may come at the expected time or be up to a week late. You may also notice some spotting.

Take a follow-up pregnancy test 3 weeks after unprotected sex if:

Your next menstrual period is lighter, shorter and/or more than 7 days late.

What to do next if you have been given ongoing hormonal contraception or need to start it again

If you have taken **Levonorgestrel** you can start ongoing contraception immediately and follow the information given:

EHC date:
Start pill date:
Use extra precaution (e.g. condoms) until:
Do pregnancy test (if required):

If you have taken **EllaOne** you need to delay starting hormonal contraception for 5 days and follow the information given:

EHC date:
Start pill date:
Use extra precaution (e.g. condoms) until:
Do pregnancy test (if required):

There is no evidence of adverse pregnancy outcomes or fetal abnormality if pregnancy occurs despite the use of hormonal emergency contraception. Using emergency hormonal contraception does not affect women's long-term fertility.

Are there any alternatives?

The IUD intrauterine device is the most effective method of emergency contraception. It will prevent 99.9% of expected pregnancies.

It may be used up to 5 days after having unprotected sex and sometimes later.

If you are interested, please ask the doctor or nurse who will be able to advise you.

Do I need a sexual health check?

Anyone who has unprotected sex is at risk of sexually transmitted infections as well as pregnancy.

Among women under the age of 20 years who attend for emergency contraception, at least 1 in 5 are infected with chlamydia.

As with other STIs this does not cause any symptoms in most people, however, it is the most common cause of infertility (inability to have children).

You can request an online sexual health screen for free from SH:24, <https://sh24.org.uk/>.

Dorset HealthCare University NHS Foundation Trust

Sexual Health Service

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Boscombe
Bournemouth
BH1 4HT

SHD @Weymouth
Weymouth Community Hospital
3 Melcombe Avenue
Weymouth
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