

# Emergency Contraception after Sexual Assault



## Emergency Contraception (EC) can decrease the chance of pregnancy after sexual assault.

Hospitals with Emergency Departments (ED) are required by law to offer EC pills and the following medically accurate information to people who could become pregnant and are seeking care after a sexual assault. The hospital ED is required to provide EC pills and information whether or not you have filed a police report or completed a medical-forensic exam and sexual assault evidence collection kit.

*If an EC pill was not provided at your ED visit today, please see the back page for help.*

Millions of people have safely used EC to prevent unintended pregnancies for over 30 years. EC is very effective - from 81% to 99% depending on the type of EC and how soon it is used.

### There are two types of EC:

1. A pill that is taken by mouth.
2. IUD (intra-uterine device) that is placed in your uterus by a health care provider

**You must take an EC pill or have an IUD placed as soon as possible and no later than 5 days (120 hours) after sexual assault.**

### Important things to know about EC pills:

- EC is sometimes called the “morning after pill” but can be used up to 5 days (120 hours)
- EC works by preventing ovulation (stopping an egg from leaving the ovary)

### EC pills DO NOT:

- **DO NOT** stop a fertilized egg from attaching inside the uterus
- **DO NOT** cause an abortion or miscarriage if you are already pregnant
- **DO NOT** cause any known birth anomalies. If you are pregnant when you take EC pills, it will not harm you or your pregnancy. If you know you are pregnant, do not take EC pills because they will not work.
- **DO NOT** affect your ability to become pregnant in the future

### There are two types of FDA-approved EC pills that you can take:

#### **1) ella®** (ulipristal acetate)

- most effective EC pill that can reduce the risk of pregnancy by 94% if used within 5 days (120 hours)
- best EC pill option for people who:
  - weigh more than 165 pounds
  - are not able to take EC within 3 days (72 hours)
- may not work as well if you weigh over 195 pounds

#### **2) Progestin EC pill** (Generic name: levonorgestrel. Brand names: Plan B One-Step, Aftera, AfterPill, BionaFem, EContra EZ, Fallback Solo, Morning After, My Choice, My Way, New Day, Opcicon One-Step, React, Take Action)

- reduces the risk of pregnancy by 81-90% depending on how soon it is taken
- works best to prevent pregnancy when used within 3 days (72 hours)
- less effective when taken after 72 hours (3 days)
- may not work as well if you weigh over 165 pounds

### After taking an EC pill, people sometimes experience mild, short-term side effects, such as:

- Nausea, stomach pain, headache, fatigue, or dizziness
- Period changes - your next period may start earlier or later than normal, and you may have more or less bleeding than usual

### Call your health care provider or pharmacist if you:

- vomit within 2-3 hours of taking an EC pill
  - you may need to take the EC pill again
  - your healthcare provider or pharmacist can give you medication to help prevent nausea and vomiting
- have severe pain in your abdomen after taking an EC pill

### More instructions about EC pills:

- **Take the pill as directed by your health care provider or pharmacist.**
- **If you do not get your period by 3 weeks after you take an EC pill, you should take a pregnancy test.**
- If you have sex after taking an EC pill, it is highly recommended to use a backup
- birth control method, if possible, such as a condom, until your next period starts. If you are chest/breastfeeding, delay feeding or pumping for 24 hours after using ella® . You can continue chest/breastfeeding without delay using a progestin EC pill.
- If you use ella® , do not start or continue hormonal birth control until 5 days after using it, and use a backup birth control method (like a condom) until your next period starts. If you use a progestin EC pill, you can start or continue a hormonal birth control method immediately after using it.

### A healthcare provider or pharmacist can answer any questions about EC pills.

### An IUD is 99% effective at preventing pregnancy if placed in the uterus by a health care provider up to 5 days (120 hours) after sexual assault. An IUD is the most effective method of emergency contraception.

- An IUD is a small plastic device that contains either copper or a hormone like the type used in birth control pills.
- You can choose to remove the IUD at any time.
- If you choose to continue the IUD, it will prevent pregnancy for 8-12 years, depending on the type.

Contact [srhp@mass.gov](mailto:srhp@mass.gov) for help getting an IUD

### Remember: You have the right to access EC pills today during your hospital ED visit.

### You still have options if you did not get an EC pill at your ED visit today.

- To get ella® ask your healthcare provider for a prescription. Or ask your local pharmacist if they will dispense ella® without a prescription from your health care provider under the standing order.
- To get progestin EC pills, like Plan B One-Step® and other brands, you can visit your local pharmacy. Anyone of any age can buy progestin EC pills without a prescription at pharmacies.
  - Ask the pharmacist if they will dispense progestin EC under the standing order so that you can have your insurance cover the cost.
- If you don't have insurance or your insurance doesn't cover EC pills, you can pay for EC pills at the pharmacy or purchase online at [nurx.com/emergencycontraception](https://nurx.com/emergencycontraception)
- Health centers can provide EC pills confidentially and often at a lower cost than pharmacies. To find one near you go to [mass.gov/sexual-and-reproductive-health-program-srhp](https://mass.gov/sexual-and-reproductive-health-program-srhp)

### Still need help getting low-cost EC or other confidential support services?

- Call a **Rape Crisis Center** at 1-800-841-8371 (English) or 1-800-223-5001 (Español), or visit [surviverape.org](https://surviverape.org)
- Contact the **DPH Sexual and Reproductive Health Program** at [srhp@mass.gov](mailto:srhp@mass.gov) or visit [mass.gov/sexual-and-reproductive-health-program-srhp](https://mass.gov/sexual-and-reproductive-health-program-srhp)

If an EC pill was not offered at your ED visit today, you can ask why. A medically and factually accurate reason must be documented in your medical record. If you were given an inaccurate reason why you could not use EC, or you were told that you needed to complete a police report or medical-forensic exam and sexual assault evidence collection kit first, you can file a formal complaint by calling the **DPH Division of Health Care Facility Licensure and Certification at 1-800-462-5540.**