



FACT SHEET – 15 April 2016

PLAN B ONE-STEP® - EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION PILL

What is Plan B One Step®?

Plan B One-Step® is an emergency contraception pill containing a progestin hormone called levonorgestrel. Progestin-only pills can reduce your risk of getting pregnant by 88% if taken within a few hours of the sexual encounter. If a woman has had sex without using birth control or if something happened (such as a condom broke), she can use emergency contraception to reduce her risk of becoming pregnant. Plan B One Step® is a form of emergency contraception that is available at military pharmacies and commercial drug stores without need for a prescription and with no age limitations.

When to take Plan B One-Step®:

You should use Plan B One-Step® within 72 hours (3 days) after you have had unprotected sex or birth control failure to help prevent pregnancy from happening. The sooner you take it, the better it works. You can use it as a backup emergency method for birth control if, for example:

- Your regular birth control failed (e.g., your partner's condom broke or slipped)
- You made a mistake with your regular method (e.g., you forgot to take your birth control pill)
- You didn't use any birth control method

Do **not** take Plan B One-Step®:

- If you are already pregnant, because it will not work.
- If you are allergic to levonorgestrel or any of the ingredients in Plan B One-Step®.
- In place of regular birth control. Plan B One-Step® should not be used as regular birth control, as it is not as effective as many other birth control options.

How does Plan B One-Step Work? What does it do?

The mechanism of action of Plan B One-Step® is not fully understood. The pill may work by disrupting ovulation, fertilization, or implantation. The best available scientific evidence indicates that Plan B One-Step® prevents pregnancy by delaying the release of an egg from the ovary. If no egg is released, it can't be fertilized, and a woman does not get pregnant. However, the delay is only for a few days, so it's still important to use effective birth control if you have sex again. Using emergency Plan B One-Step® will NOT harm an established pregnancy or cause an abortion. Plan B One-Step®:

- is **not** effective if the user is already pregnant.
- does **not** induce abortion.
- will **not** harm an existing pregnancy.
- does **not** protect against sexually transmitted infections.
- is **not** intended for frequent use because it is less effective than other birth control options.
- should **not** be taken *before* unprotected sex.
- is **not** recommended as a primary form of contraception, because it is not as effective as many other forms of contraception.



Are emergency contraception pills the same as the "morning after pill"?

Yes. However, the words "morning after" are misleading, because emergency contraceptive pills can be used up to 72 hours after sex (or 120 hours after sex with a different emergency contraction pill called Ella), not just the next morning.

Are emergency contraception pills the same as "abortion medications"?

No. Abortion medications are used to terminate an established pregnancy and must be prescribed by a doctor.

What are the side effects of using Plan B One-Step®?

When taken as directed, Plan B One-Step® is generally safe for women. Some women will have mild temporary side effects that include: menstrual changes; nausea; lower stomach (abdominal) pain; tiredness; headache; dizziness; breast pain; and vomiting. These are similar to the side effects that some women have when taking regular birth control pills. Some women taking Plan B One-Step® will have menstrual changes such as spotting or bleeding before their next period. Some women may have a heavier or lighter next period, or a period that is early or late. If you experience severe abdominal pain, you may have an ectopic pregnancy and should get immediate medical attention. If your period is more than a week late, you should get a pregnancy test.

How do I know if Plan B One-Step® worked?

The only way of knowing whether Plan B One-Step® has worked is when you get your next period, which should come at the expected time or within a week of the expected time. If your period is more than one week late, you may be pregnant. If you have any questions or concerns, please be sure to call your physician or healthcare professional.

Keep in mind, Plan B One-Step® is less likely to work if:

- You've already had unprotected sex or birth control failure earlier in your menstrual cycle
- You have unprotected sex or birth control failure again in the same menstrual cycle after taking Plan B One-Step®
- You vomit within two hours of taking Plan B One-Step® (talk to your healthcare professional if this happens)

Where can I get Plan B One-Step®?

Plan B One-Step is sold on the shelf of drug stores (check the family planning aisle) with no age restrictions and no prescription needed. Plan B One-Step® is also available at no cost and without a prescription in military pharmacies (a DoD identification card is required, as with any health care service), and is available some on Navy ships.

Your future plans...

If you're sexually active, it is always a good idea to see a healthcare professional for routine checkups. Your healthcare professional will talk to you about sexually transmitted infections, if necessary, test you for them, discuss effective methods of regular birth control, and answer any other questions you may have.

Plan B One-Step® will not protect you against sexually transmitted infections, so use condoms along with your chosen form of birth control if you're worried about STIs.

Where can I get more information?

For detailed information, counseling, and access to birth control options, contact your health care provider. For further information regarding contraception, visit the Sexual Health and Responsibility Program at:
<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/reproductive-sexual-health/Pages/contraception.aspx>



This information was adapted by the Sexual Health and Responsibility Program (SHARP), Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center from Hatcher et al (2011) Contraceptive Technology, 20th ed; Emergency Contraception, Kaiser Family Foundation fact sheet (May 14, 2013); Princeton Univ, Emergency Contraception: A Last Chance to Prevent Unintended Pregnancy Trussell, Raymond, Cleland, MPA, March 2016; <http://ec.princeton.edu/questions/ec-review.pdf> [accessed 15 April 2016]