

Englisch

Help with contraception mishaps



My choice of pharmaceuticals





Key facts

OVULATION AND PREGNANCY

The term ovulation refers to the release of a mature, fertile egg from the ovary. The egg then moves through the fallopian tube into the uterus. If the egg is

- **fertilised**, during this time, it implants into the mucous membrane of the uterus. A pregnancy begins.
- **not fertilised**, it leaves the body during menstruation, which occurs several days later.

After it is released, an egg can be fertilised for approximately 24 hours, while the male sperm cells can survive inside a woman's body for up to five days. This is why unprotected intercourse before ovulation can also result in pregnancy. What's more, ovulation occurs at different times for different women and can also vary greatly from month to month.

So there are many reasons why a contraceptive failure can lead to an unwanted pregnancy, regardless of which day in the cycle it occurs. If the *emergency contraceptive pill* is taken early enough, this can often be prevented (see question 3 and question 5).

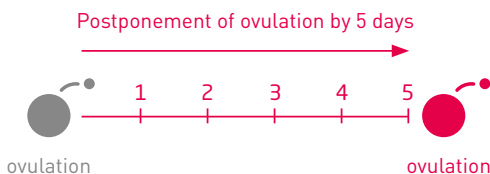
Did your birth control fail? Don't panic!

Did the condom break? Did you forget your pill? It can happen to anyone. In these exceptional situations, the *emergency contraceptive pill* (also known as the morning-after pill) can prevent unwanted pregnancy.

There is a wide range of birth control methods available. But even if you use them carefully, they can sometimes fail, such as when a condom slips off. If this happens, there is no need to feel embarrassed or scared. What's important is that you handle the situation responsibly. This brochure provides you with important information on emergency contraception that you may find helpful.

1 What is the *emergency contraceptive pill* and how does it work?

The emergency pill is an emergency birth control method that is used after unprotected intercourse. It can help prevent an unwanted pregnancy after another birth control method has failed. It works by delaying ovulation until the male sperm cells are no longer able to fertilise an egg. This means that fertilisation cannot occur and therefore a pregnancy will not result. The emergency contraceptive pill has been available without a prescription in pharmacies since 2015.



2 What are the different kinds of *emergency contraceptive pills* and how are they different?

Emergency pills contain either levonorgestrel or ulipristal acetate as the active ingredient. The difference between the two ingredients is the time window in which the pills will work. Levonorgestrel can be used up to three days and ulipristal acetate up to five days after contraceptive failure.

3 When should I take the *emergency contraceptive pill*?

As a general rule, the sooner the better! An *emergency pill* with the active ingredient levonorgestrel should be taken preferably within the first 12 hours after unprotected intercourse, and no later than 72 hours (three days). An *emergency pill* with the active ingredient ulipristal acetate should also be taken as soon as possible, but no later than 120 hours (five days) after unprotected sex.

4 What should I watch out for when taking it?

The *emergency contraceptive pill* should be swallowed whole with some water. It can be taken with or without food. However, if you vomit within three hours after taking it, a second *emergency pill* should be taken. After vomiting, it is important to take a pill containing the same active ingredient as the first one. If you have a sensitive stomach, you can have a piece of bread when you take the pill to prevent nausea and vomiting (see question 9). As with any medication, you should carefully read the package insert before use.

5 Does the *emergency contraceptive pill* always prevent pregnancy?

No *emergency pill* can prevent an unwanted pregnancy 100 percent of the time, but there is a very good chance that it will. A pregnancy can only be prevented if ovulation has not yet occurred.

i No *emergency contraceptive pill* is 100 percent effective!

6 How can I tell if the *emergency contraceptive pill* has worked?

If it has worked, your period will start on the expected date and the flow will be as usual. Your period might start a few days earlier or later in some cases. If your period is more than five days later than expected or if it is unusually light or heavy, you should take a pregnancy test and see a gynaecologist.

7 Is there anything that reduces the effectiveness of the *emergency pill*?

Yes. It can be less effective if you vomit after taking it (see question 4). In addition, some medications, such as drugs used to treat epilepsy or an HIV infection, a bacterial infection or supplements containing St John's wort or cyclosporine can reduce the effectiveness of the *emergency pill*. You can obtain more detailed information about this from a doctor, a pharmacist or the package insert. Alcohol and nicotine do not interfere with the effectiveness of the *emergency pill*.

8 Can the *emergency contraceptive pill* terminate a pregnancy that has already occurred?

The *emergency contraceptive pill* is not an abortion pill! If taken in time, it can prevent an unwanted pregnancy by delaying ovulation, but it cannot terminate it.

i The *emergency contraceptive pill* is not an abortion pill!

9 Does the *emergency contraceptive pill* have any side effects? If so, what are they?

Nausea, headache, vomiting, chest tightness or spotting may occur after taking it. If you vomit (see question 4), you will need to take a second *emergency pill*. Should these and/or other side effects occur and persist, please consult a gynaecologist.

10 How long does the *emergency contraceptive pill* protect against pregnancy?

The *emergency pill* does not provide lasting protection during any unprotected sexual intercourse that occurs after you take it. Women who regularly take the birth control pill must also use an additional barrier method of contraception, such as a condom, until their next period. It is important to keep in mind that the *emergency pill* does not provide any protection against sexually transmitted diseases.

i The *emergency contraceptive pill* does not cause infertility!

11 Can the *emergency contraceptive pill* leave me permanently infertile?

No. It does not affect fertility. Taking the *emergency pill* does not affect your ability to have children later on.

12 Can the *emergency pill* replace regular contraceptive methods?

No, the *emergency pill* is not a regular contraceptive. It should only be used in exceptional cases and cannot replace conventional methods of contraception such as the regular birth control pill or condoms. Your gynaecologist can give you advice on suitable contraceptive methods.

13 Can I continue breastfeeding after taking the *emergency contraceptive pill*?

It is recommended that nursing mothers take a break from breastfeeding after taking the *emergency pill*. Breastfeeding should be discontinued for eight hours after taking levonorgestrel, while a one-week break is recommended after taking ulipristal acetate.

14 How much does the *emergency pill* cost? Is it covered by my health insurance?

The *emergency pill* with the active ingredient levonorgestrel usually costs less than 23 euros. The *emergency pill* with the active ingredient ulipristal acetate costs a bit more. Prices can of course vary from pharmacy to pharmacy. For women under the age of 22, the cost of the *emergency contraceptive pill* is reimbursed by their health insurance. However, it must be prescribed by a doctor in order to be reimbursed.

Useful links and contacts:

Emergency pharmacies:

www.aponet.de/service/notdienstapotheke-finden

Telephone helpline:

(+49 - 800) 1110-111 or (+49 - 800) 1110-222 (in Germany)

pro familia information hotline:

(+49 - 1805) 776 - 326 (0.14 cent per minute in Germany)

German Federal Centre for Health Education:

www.bzga.de/infomaterialien/familienplanung/verhuetung/die-pille-danach-faltblatt/