

The morning-after pill. Emergency contraception

What is it?

It is called *the morning-after pill* and it can prevent pregnancy after you have had sex without using contraceptives or if you have not used them correctly. You should take it as soon as possible, in the next 72 hours (3 days) after having unprotected sex. It contains high doses of the hormone progesterone.

It only prevents pregnancy after having sex that one particular time: so, if you are planning to have sex again, you should use a safe method of contraception.

What can't it be used for?

It is not a valid method of contraception for preventing pregnancy on a regular basis. It is just a useful method in case of an emergency. It does not give you protection against sexually transmitted diseases.

How and when should you take it?

You should take just one pill during the first 72 hours (3 days) after having unprotected sex. The pill is most effective when you take it during the first 12 hours after having sex. With every 12 hours that go by, it becomes less effective.

If you vomit or have diarrhea in the 3 hours after taking the pill, you should see a doctor.

Can you get pregnant even if you have taken the morning-after pill?

Although it is very effective during the first few hours, it is not one hundred percent safe. Its effectiveness depends on how long after having sex you take it.

Where can you get the morning-after pill?

You can get it at the pharmacy, without a prescription, or at a primary health-care center (CAP). In case of doubt, it is a good idea to see a doctor or a nurse to find out about the pill's side effects and about methods of contraception to avoid similar situations in the future: for instance, condoms are a very safe method.

They prevent you from getting pregnant as well as from catching sexually transmitted diseases, and so they are highly recommended.

What happens when you take the pill?

A week after taking it you will have vaginal bleeding similar to menstruation. The next 2 or 3 periods may differ in frequency or intensity from your normal menstruation.

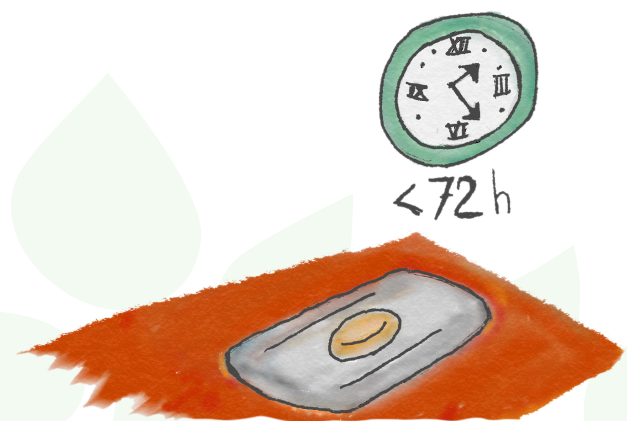
Your period should come 3 weeks after taking the pill at the latest. If it does not come you should do a pregnancy test. You can buy it at the pharmacy.

What side effects can the pill have?

It can give you headaches, stomach ache, nausea or vomiting, period pains or make you feel dizzy.

What happens if you take the pill after 72 hours?

Although the pill becomes much less effective, cases have been recorded of taking it up to 120 hours (5 days) after having unprotected sex, without any complications. However, to be sure that it has worked you will have to wait for the bleeding due 21 days after having sex: if there is no bleeding, you should do a pregnancy test.



What should I do if I get pregnant?

Go to the doctor or gynecologist for information and medical guidance (National Sexual and Reproductive Health-Care Program [ASSIR]) or phone the National Health Service 24-hour information call line: 902111444.