

# Emergency Contraception

## What are my options?

A service provided by

**Sheffield Teaching Hospitals**



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# What is emergency contraception?

If you have had unprotected sex, or if your usual contraception has failed (e.g. the condom split or you forgot to take your pill), you can use emergency contraception.

There are three types of emergency contraception:

- The copper IUD (emergency coil)
- The emergency pill
  - Levonelle
  - EllaOne

## The emergency IUD (Intrauterine Device)

### What is the emergency IUD?

An IUD is a small plastic and copper device that is put into your womb. It can be fitted up to 5 days after unprotected sex and at any time during the menstrual cycle providing that this is the **only** unprotected sex that has occurred since your last period.

If you have had unprotected sex more than once since your last period, then an IUD can be fitted up to 5 days after the earliest time you could have released an egg (ovulation).

### How effective is the emergency IUD?

It is the most effective form of emergency contraception and will prevent over 99% of expected pregnancies. It is ten times more effective than the emergency pill.

### How is the IUD fitted?

The doctor or nurse will examine you internally to check the position and size of your womb before they put in an IUD. The cervix (the neck of the womb) will be swabbed to check for chlamydia and gonorrhoea

infection. The fitting of the IUD takes approximately 10-15 minutes. It can be uncomfortable or painful for some women, therefore you may want to take a painkiller beforehand. You may experience a period type pain and some light bleeding for a few days after the IUD has been fitted.

## **Are there any risks if the IUD fails?**

The emergency IUD is highly effective. However, if it does fail and you become pregnant, there is a risk that the IUD can cause a miscarriage or that an ectopic pregnancy may occur. If you think that you are pregnant it is important that you seek advice as soon as possible.

## **Do I need to see a nurse or doctor after the IUD has been fitted?**

Not necessarily. If you are happy with the IUD and you have had a normal period and are pain free, then you do not need to have the coil checked. If you have problems, arrange to see a nurse or doctor especially if;

- You miss your next period
- You have significant pain that doesn't settle within a few days
- You have symptoms of an STI - vaginal discharge, pelvic pain.

## **Will the emergency IUD protect me from pregnancy until my next period?**

Yes, as soon as it has been fitted, you will be protected against pregnancy until the IUD is taken out.

When can I have the IUD removed?

If you do not want to keep the IUD as your regular method of contraception, it can be removed when you next have a period.

## **The emergency pill - EllaOne**

EllaOne is an emergency contraceptive pill containing ulipristal, a progestogen blocker.

### **How do I take it?**

You will be given one tablet to take. It should be taken within 5 days of unprotected sex. It should not be taken if you already take a contraceptive pill everyday as it can interact with regular contraception.

## **The emergency pill - Levonelle**

The emergency contraceptive pill called Levonelle is a tablet containing levonorgestrel (progestogen), a hormone which is similar to the natural progesterone women produce in their ovaries.

How do I take it?

You will be given one pill to take. It should be taken within 3 days (72 hours) of having unprotected sex.

It is more effective if taken soon after unprotected sex.

It can be taken if you have forgotten your regular contraceptive pill and you can start straight back on the pill

### **How does the emergency pill work?**

The emergency pill works by stopping or delaying an egg being released (ovulation).

### **When will I get my next period?**

Your next period may come early or a few days late. If your period is more than 7 days late, go back to clinic for a pregnancy test.

## **How effective is the emergency pill?**

The emergency pill is more effective and works better the sooner it is taken after unprotected sex. However it is not as effective as using other methods of contraception regularly, and it can fail even if it has been taken correctly.

## **What are the side effects?**

Some women may feel sick, dizzy or tired, or may get headaches, breast tenderness or abdominal pain.

A very small number of women vomit. If you are sick within 3 hours of taking the pill, please come back to clinic (or see your GP or pharmacist) as soon as possible to get another tablet.

There are no serious long or short term side effects from using the emergency pill.

## **Will the emergency pill protect me from pregnancy until my next period?**

No, you must use effective contraception (e.g. condoms). If you have further unprotected sex, you can repeat the emergency pill. You should wait 5 days after taking EllaOne before you start or restart taking your regular hormonal contraceptive pill.

## **Do I need to see a nurse or doctor after I've taken the pill?**

Not usually, but do go and see a nurse or doctor if:

- Your next period is more than 7 days late
- You think you may be pregnant
- Your next period is lighter or shorter than your usual period
- You have any sudden or unusual pain in the lower abdomen

## **Are there any risks if the emergency pill fails?**

The emergency pill has not been shown to affect a pregnancy or harm a developing baby. As with any pregnancy, there is a small chance that an ectopic pregnancy may occur. If you think you may be pregnant it is important to seek advice as soon as possible.

## **How many times can I use the emergency pill?**

You can take the emergency pill as many times as you need to and you can take it more than once in any menstrual cycle. However, it is not as effective as using other methods of contraception regularly.

## **Can I get the emergency pill from anywhere else?**

The emergency pill is also available from the following places:

- Your GP or Practice Nurse
- Sheffield NHS Walk-In Centre, Broad Lane which is open all year from 8am-10pm, no appointment necessary. Telephone 0114 241 2700
- Your local pharmacy – if you are over 18 years old, you will be required to pay for the pill

## **Does emergency contraception protect me from sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?**

No, emergency contraception only protects you from pregnancy. To avoid STIs including chlamydia, gonorrhoea and HIV, you must use condoms.

## **What happens at Sexual Health Sheffield?**

- When you attend for your appointment, you will be asked to provide the following:
- Your name and how we can contact you - any details you provide will be treated confidentially

- During your visit you will be asked personal information so we can provide the relevant and appropriate care
- We have a duty of care to all our patients, so if you are 17 or under you will be asked relevant questions to assess your safety. If staff are concerned, they may talk to you about what to do about this and may contact other appropriate agencies. Sexual Health Sheffield will not tell your parents or carers that you have visited Sexual Health Sheffield

This is the service you can expect when you attend Sexual Health Sheffield:

- All advice, information, tests, contraception, condoms and treatments are free at Sexual Health Sheffield
- No one should judge you because of your sexual behaviour or lifestyle
- All our services are confidential
- All Sexual Health Sheffield workers are appropriately and fully trained NHS staff
- All tests are optional; no examination will take place without your permission
- Please ask questions to ensure you fully understand what services have been offered, what tests carried out and what treatments given
- You can have a chaperone to help you feel more comfortable – please ask
- Our friendly & professional staff are here to help you. We will give you as much support as you need (particularly if you need help on how to inform any partners)

If you feel that we have not met the above or want to give us any other feedback, please contact us via

**[www.sth.nhs.uk/patients/tell-us-what-you-think](http://www.sth.nhs.uk/patients/tell-us-what-you-think)**

# Sexual Health Sheffield

Visit Sexual Health Sheffield's website for opening times

- **[www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk](http://www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk)**
- **0114 226 8888**



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