

The aim of the Poplar Grove Practice is to provide a high standard of holistic primary care to our entitled patients by working together as a cohesive multi-disciplinary team.

Our commitment to you, our patients, is to provide you with the highest possible standard of medical care with an efficiently run and friendly service. You will be treated as an individual with dignity, courtesy and respect at all times, irrespective of your ethnic origin, religious belief, sex or sexuality, personal attributes or the nature of your health problems. We expect to be treated in the same way.



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POPLAR GROVE
P R A C T I C E

Patient Information Leaflet

Emergency Contraception

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Emergency Contraception

If you have unprotected sex but do not wish to become pregnant, you may need emergency contraception. This is the term used for contraception used AFTER you have already had sex. There are several options available, but they must be used within 3-5 days after the unprotected sex. There are two types of pills which have a good chance of preventing pregnancy, sometimes called the "morning after pill". Alternatively an intrauterine contraceptive device (IUCD) can be fitted, which is even more effective.

What is emergency contraception?

There are three types of emergency contraception now available to women. These are two types of pill, and the intrauterine contraceptive device (IUCD) - also called the coil. They are available from your GP practice, NHS walk-in centres, family planning organisations and pharmacies.

Emergency contraception can be used:

If you have had sex without using contraception. If you have had sex, but there was a mistake with contraception. For example, a split condom or if you forgot to take your usual contraceptive pills.

The progestogen pill

This is a pill that contains levonorgestrel which is a progestogen hormone. There are several different ones available, but they all contain the same dose of levonorgestrel. You can get it free on prescription or you can buy it from pharmacies, without a prescription. The usual dose is one pill which contains 1.5 mg of levonorgestrel.

When do I take it and how does it work?

Take the pill as soon as possible after unprotected sex. The earlier you take the pill, the more effective it is. It should be taken within 72 hours (three days). It is thought to work mainly by

preventing or delaying the release of an egg from your ovary, which normally happens each month (ovulation). It is not thought to cause an abortion, ie it does not have an effect if an embryo has already settled (implanted) into the womb (uterus).

How effective is the progestogen pill?

Although emergency contraception is effective, it is not as reliable as regular planned contraception. Therefore, it should only be used in emergencies.

Are there any side-effects with the emergency progestogen pill?

Side-effects with the emergency progestogen pill are uncommon. However, some women feel sick for about 24 hours after taking the pill. Some women are actually sick (vomit.) This may be less likely to happen if the pill is taken with food.

If you vomit within two hours of taking the pill then either:

Take another pill as soon as possible. (You may need to get a further prescription, or buy another pill from the pharmacy. You may also wish to get a prescription for some anti-sickness tablets.) OR a coil (IUCD) can be inserted (see below). Other mild side-effects occur in some women for a short time, such as diarrhoea, dizziness and breast tenderness. There may be some change to your periods in the month after taking the pill. Your period may be early, or late, or you may get some erratic bleeding.

Who should not take the emergency progestogen pill?

Do not take it if you are already likely to be pregnant. Most women are able to take the emergency progestogen pill. However, it is not suitable for all women. Make sure the doctor, nurse or pharmacist prescribing you the emergency contraception pill knows about all the other pills you are taking.

If the pill did not work and you became pregnant, there is no evidence that taking the emergency progestogen pill is harmful to the baby.

Some reasons why the emergency contraception pills are less likely to be successful

If you take the first pill more than 120 hours after unprotected sex.

If you are sick (vomit) within three hours of taking the pill and do not take a repeat dose.

If you also had unprotected sex at an earlier time since your last period.

If you have unprotected sex again after taking emergency contraception.

An alternative method of emergency contraception

is to have an IUCD (often known as a coil) inserted by a doctor or nurse. This can be done up to five days after unprotected sex. It has the advantage of providing ongoing contraception and is also more effective than taking hormone tablets. Less than 1 woman in 100 would get pregnant after having the coil inserted for emergency contraception, meaning it is nearly 100% effective.

Most women can use the coil. Exceptions include those who have copper allergy, and those who have infections or cancer in their genital areas or womb (uterus).

An important message

See a doctor urgently if you have any lower tummy (abdominal) pain or abnormal bleeding in the 2-6 weeks following use of emergency contraception. These are the main symptoms of an ectopic pregnancy. This is rare, but it is best to be aware of the possibility as it is a serious condition. Also, do a pregnancy test or see a doctor if your next due period is more than seven days late. See your doctor if you have any other concerns or questions.