

## EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILLS (ECP)

### WHAT IS PLAN B?

Plan B is the name of an emergency contraception method. You will receive two pills in a package. These two pills contain levonorgestrel, a synthetic progestin. Because there is no estrogen, there are fewer side effects than with other forms of ECP.

### WHEN IS IT USED?

Plan B can prevent pregnancy if you take it within 5 days of unprotected sexual intercourse. The sooner you take it, the better it will work.

You can use Plan B if:

- a condom broke
- you used withdrawal
- you were more than 12 hours late taking the birth control pill and didn't use condoms
- you were late getting Depo Provera
- you were late or missed changing your contraceptive patch/ring or the patch/ring fell off/out
- no contraception was used
- you were sexually assaulted

### HOW DO YOU TAKE IT?

There are 2 ways to take Plan B. One way is to take two pills at the same time. The other way is to take one pill as soon as possible and the second pill 12 hours later. Discuss which way would be best for you with your clinic nurse/counsellor.

### HOW EFFECTIVE IS IT?

**Plan B is most effective if you take it in the first 24 hours after unprotected vaginal sex.** It can be taken up to 5 days after unprotected intercourse, although is less effective the later it is taken. If you are already pregnant, Plan B will not cause an abortion. Plan B will not harm a fetus if a pregnancy occurs.

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

Plan B works by preventing ovulation, by preventing conception, and/or by preventing implantation.

### ARE THERE ANY SIDE EFFECTS?

- Most women do not experience side effects.
- The most common side effect is nausea. Very few women who take Plan B will vomit. If you vomit within one hour of taking either the first or the second pill, call the clinic or go to a walk-in clinic.
- Some women also have menstrual changes – a period that comes earlier or later than expected, or a heavier or lighter period than usual.
- You may have some spotting of blood after taking Plan B.
- Less common side effects are: breast tenderness, headache, dizziness, fatigue, lower abdominal pain and diarrhea.
- Any side effect should disappear in 24 hours.

### WHAT ABOUT BIRTH CONTROL PILLS?

If you took the ECP and now want to start taking the birth control pill speak to the clinic physician, nurse or counsellor for advice about the best way for you to begin taking the birth control pill.

If you took the ECP because you had vaginal sex and were late or missed your birth control pills make sure you use condoms or another back up method for 7 days. **Continue taking your birth control pills in this manner:**

- (1) If you miss 1 pill of your pack:
  - (a) Take it as soon as you remember.
  - (b) Take your next pill at the usual time – this may mean 2 pills at the same time.
- (2) If you miss 2 pills or more in the FIRST 2 WEEKS of your package:
  - (a) Throw out the missed pills
  - (b) Restart the rest of your pills within 24 hours of the ECP
- (3) If you miss 2 pills or more in the THIRD WEEK of your package:
  - (a) Throw out the missed pills and the rest of the pack.
  - (b) Start a new package of pills within 24 hours of the ECP

#### **WHAT ABOUT THE CONTRACEPTIVE PATCH?**

You should speak with a physician, nurse or counsellor re Plan B if you had unprotected vaginal sex and:

- you were more than one day late in putting on the first patch of your cycle
- you were more than 48 hours late in putting on your patch during weeks 2 or 3 of your cycle
- your patch fell off for more than 24 hours or you are unsure how long your patch was loose or when it fell off.

If you do take Plan B and are restarting the patch, you should take Plan B the way the clinic physician, nurse or counsellor explained and put on the patch as soon as possible.

#### **WHAT ABOUT THE CONTRACEPTIVE RING?**

You should speak with a physician, nurse or counsellor about Plan B if you had unprotected vaginal sex and:

- the ring was out for more than 3 hours
- the ring was left in place for more than 4 weeks
- you were late in inserting a new ring

If you do take Plan B and are restarting the contraceptive ring, you should take Plan B the way the clinic physician, nurse or counsellor explained and insert the ring as soon as possible.

#### **WHAT IF YOUR PERIOD DOESN'T COME AFTER TAKING PLAN B?**

If you don't get a period within four weeks, come in for a pregnancy test. Plan B will not protect you from pregnancy for the rest of your menstrual cycle.

#### **OTHER INFORMATION:**

- Use condoms to protect you from Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Plan B does not protect against STIs. Consider getting tested.
- Plan B costs \$10.00 when bought at a sexual health clinic. You can ask to buy an extra package of Plan B to keep for future use. If you have a package of Plan B for future use, check the expiry date. **It will not be effective if it has expired.**
- Keep Plan B in a cool dry place out of the reach of children.

#### **WHAT IF THERE IS A PROBLEM AND THE CLINIC IS CLOSED?**

Plan B is also available at a pharmacy without a prescription. Costs will vary.  
**Call the AIDS and Sexual Health InfoLine at 416-392-2437**

#### **SAFER SEX**

**To reduce your risk of getting a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI), use a condom every time you have oral sex, genital, vaginal or anal contact.**