

Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation  
Family Planning  
563-382-8436  
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### **PLAN B INFORMATION SHEET**

**PLAN B:     DOSAGE:**   Two tablets taken within 120 hours of unprotected intercourse.

Crackers or a glass of milk taken with the pills may help prevent nausea.

The mechanism of action of Plan B is to prevent pregnancy, but not to interrupt or disrupt an already-established pregnancy.

**SIDE-EFFECTS:** Following treatment with Plan B, nausea occurs in approximately 23% of women, and vomiting in 6%. Other reported complaints include fatigue, breast tenderness, headache, abdominal pain, and dizziness. Side effects subside within a day or two after treatment is completed. If you have vomiting within 1 hour call Family Planning.

**FREQUENT USE:** Plan B for emergency use only. It is not recommended for routine use because it is less effective than regular contraceptives. You should consider calling Family Planning to get on a more reliable form of birth control.

**USE AFTER 120 HOURS:** Although studies of Plan B treatment have all specified treatment within 120 hours, it is unlikely that Plan B effectiveness after 120 hours drops immediately to zero. Late treatment might reduce the risk for pregnancy and is unlikely to be harmful.

**USE AFTER MULTIPLE ACTS OF UNPROTECTED INTERCOURSE:** If more than 120 hours have elapsed since the time of the FIRST unprotected exposure, Plan B may not be effective in preventing pregnancy that resulted from the first exposure.

Because Plan B can delay ovulation, you could be at risk of pregnancy in the first few days after treatment. You should use a back-up method of birth control for the remainder of your cycle, then initiate a regular method of birth control with your next menstrual cycle.

Your next menstrual cycle may not come at the expected time (sometimes it beings earlier than expected, other times it may be later). If you do not have a period within THREE weeks of taking Plan B, return to clinic for a pregnancy test and an appointment. *The possibility of an ectopic pregnancy must be ruled out.* While emergency contraception pills are unlikely to increase the risk of ectopic pregnancy, if you become pregnant despite using emergency contraception you may have a higher rate of ectopic pregnancy than do other pregnant women.

Plan B provides a significant decrease in the risk of pregnancy when taken within 120 hours after unprotected intercourse. Consider use of Plan B if no birth control was used; if a condom broke or came off, if a diaphragm slipped out of place, or if a Depo Provera injection is more than 6 days late. If a woman is on birth control pills, and has missed two or more active pills in the current pill pack, or recently stopped the birth control pill and back-up birth control was not used, Plan B would be appropriate.

Forced, unprotected intercourse is a very appropriate reason to use emergency contraceptives. It is very important to confide in a health professional if unwanted or forced sexual contact occurred. Treatment to prevent sexually transmitted infections is available, and there are resources available to provide emotional support and help.

**WHAT IS THE RISK OF PREGNANCY AFTER UNPROTECTED INTERCOURSE:** It is not possible to predict with 100% accuracy the risk of pregnancy. Even when a woman usually has a regular, predictable cycle, factors such as stress, illness, changes in exercise levels, and travel can upset the ovulation pattern. In general, it is not likely for pregnancy to occur if intercourse takes place during the menstrual period. The life span of an egg is 24 – 72 hours. The life span of sperm, inside the uterus is 2-7 days. Fertilization of an egg is more likely to happen if intercourse occurs before or during ovulation. If intercourse after ovulation has occurred, it is less likely to cause pregnancy. As a general calculation of risk, for those with menstrual cycles 26 – 32 days in length, the greatest risk of pregnancy exists from day 8 through 21.

### **HOW DOES PLAN B WORK? HOW EFFECTIVE IS IT?**

Plan B must be taken within 120 hours of unprotected intercourse. This allows the body to have time to absorb the pills and let the hormones interrupt egg production and/or change the uterine lining before the fertilized egg could implant. It is believed that the greatest benefit is derived when taken in the first 12-24 hours. Emergency contraceptive pills will not interfere with a pregnancy that is already established. If unprotected intercourse has occurred more than once and it occurred more than 120 hours ago, it is possible that a pregnancy already exists, although it may be too early to be detected by a pregnancy test. There is no evidence that the hormones contained in the emergency contraceptive pill have an adverse effect on a pregnancy which might already be established or which might result from a failure of Plan B.

Plan B decreases the chance of pregnancy by 89%. If a woman has unprotected intercourse during midcycle, her risk of pregnancy may be as high as 39% (3 in 10). When Plan B is used at other times in the cycle when risk of pregnancy is lower, the degree of effectiveness is even greater. Emergency contraception does not provide any degree of contraceptive protection if future unprotected intercourse occurs, even in the same menstrual cycle.

### **CONTRAINDICATIONS:**

- Known or suspected pregnancy
- Hypersensitivity to product
- Undiagnosed abnormal genital bleeding

Ectopic warnings: a pregnancy that occurs outside the uterus, as in the fallopian tubes, is called an Ectopic Pregnancy and is a medical emergency. Signs of that could be abdominal pain, abnormal vaginal bleeding, nausea, vomiting, shoulder pain or dizziness. If these symptoms occur go directly to an emergency room.

If you have questions or concerns call our Family Planning Office at the numbers listed on the front of this sheet. If you think it is an emergency call 911 or go to an emergency room.

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