

## Emergency Contraception like “Plan B”

### Background

Teens can avoid unintended pregnancy in several ways. Of course, the best way to avoid pregnancy is to wait to have sex. (See our handout *Abstinence: Why It's Better to Wait*). Birth control is available to teens as hormones like pills or barriers like condoms with spermicide in case of a break or leak. (See our handout *Contraception*). Some teens, though, have unprotected sex and want to avoid unintended pregnancy. Emergency contraception, sometimes known as Plan B, can be used after sex to prevent pregnancy.

### Key Facts

- 80% of pregnancies in teens are unintended
- Plan B to reduce the chance of pregnancy after unprotected intercourse is most effective if used in the first 24 hours but can be used up to 120 hours (5days) later. It does not always work. The sooner after sex it is taken, the better the chances to avoid pregnancy.
- *Emergency contraception like Plan B is not as effective as regular use of birth control*
- Plan B is available over the counter, or contact Planned Parenthood (349 Rt 31 South, Building B, Suite 503, Flemington, NJ 08822 ~ 908.782.7727)
- The two most common brands are Plan B and Next Choice. Plan B One Step is the easiest to use. Facts about other types of emergency contraception are not included here.
- A pregnancy test must be done if there is no normal period with three weeks of emergency contraception use
- Emergency contraception works the same way as birth control pills – it prevents ovulation and hormone production by the ovary.
- Emergency contraception does not disrupt or damage an existing pregnancy
- Possible side effects include a heavier period, nausea or vomiting; no serious effects were found with repeated use
- Continue to use your regular birth control even if you used Plan B. If you have to use Plan B because you didn't take your birth control pills on schedule, do not interrupt taking your pills. Keep on the same schedule. Continue to use your patch, ring, or shots if that is your usual method of birth control. Continue to use condoms.
- Girls who can't take estrogen containing birth control pills may use Plan B
- *Emergency contraception does not protect against sexually transmitted infections, sometimes called STDs. Sexually active teens need testing for STDs.*
- Studies have shown that teens who have access to emergency contraception do not have more sex or use regular birth control less
- Up to 10% of sexually active teens are the victims of sexual assault. Teens may experience condom slippage or breakage, forget to take hormonal contraceptives on schedule, or have unprotected sex due to lack of planning or the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- By law, teens can confidentially ask pediatricians about contraception. We always recommend that teens and parents discuss how to make choices, but we also understand that this is not always possible.

- If you have more questions, please ask us! More information is available at <http://ec.princeton.edu>

Reviewed 11/15