

# sextalk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

**factoid** 74% of UA students do not use tobacco.\* (smoke, chew or use snuff)  
(2005 Health & Wellness Survey, n=2036) \*past 30 days

## Q. How does the morning after pill work and where can I get it? How effective is it?

A. The “morning after” pill is also called Emergency Contraception (EC). Many brands of birth control pills can be used as EC when taken in the proper dose.

**Emergency contraception is NOT the abortion pill.** In fact, emergency contraception prevents pregnancy and reduces the need for induced abortion. Depending on the time during the menstrual cycle that it is taken, EC may inhibit or delay ovulation, inhibit tubal transport of the egg or sperm, interfere with fertilization, or alter the endometrium (the lining of the uterus). EC will not interrupt a pregnancy where the fertilized egg has already implanted into the uterine wall. It will not cause an abortion or terminate an existing pregnancy. If a woman is already pregnant, EC does not work and will not harm the fetus or the mother. The most common side effect of EC is nausea.

On average, if 100 women have unprotected intercourse once during the second or third week of their menstrual cycle, 8 will become pregnant. If EC is taken within 120 hours (5 days or less) of unprotected intercourse only 1-2 will become pregnant – a 75-89% reduction in the risk of pregnancy.

In Arizona, EC is available only by prescription from a medical provider (M.D., D.O., N.P., P.A.). The Campus Health Service prescribes and dispenses EC as do many local medical offices and urgent care centers. In Oregon and California approved pharmacists can prescribe EC. It is often prescribed in cases of sexual assault, unplanned sex, or unprotected sex where contraception has failed or not been used – hence the name “emergency”. The cost for EC at the UA Campus Health Service is \$25. Call 621-9202 for an appointment.

While EC is an important option to know about, it is not as effective as regularly taking oral contraceptives. Most hormonal birth control methods are 98-99.5% effective in preventing pregnancy. Therefore, EC should not be relied on as a regular and repeated method of birth control. For more info: visit [www.not-2-late.com](http://www.not-2-late.com).

Have a question? Send it to [sextalk@email.arizona.edu](mailto:sextalk@email.arizona.edu)

SexTalk is written by Lee Ann Hamilton, M.A., CHES, Melissa McGee, Ph.D., MPH & David Salafsky, MPH, health educators at The University of Arizona Campus Health Service.

