

sextalk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

factoid Men (over age 18) can buy the “morning after pill” for their partners at most pharmacies.

Q. I took a break from the birth control pill for one month. This weekend I had sex using a condom and it broke. Where can I get emergency contraception? What are the chances that I’m pregnant?

A. It’s hard to estimate your chances of pregnancy from one sexual encounter. It’s best to assume that without any contraception, being young (and presumably fertile), you are at high risk of getting pregnant. Get to a pharmacy ASAP for Plan B®, also known as the “morning after pill.” A prescription is NOT needed for Plan B® – just talk to the pharmacist and they will sell you the medication after confirming that you are over the age of 18 (Arizona State Law). Women 17 years of age or younger will need to see a medical provider for a prescription (this may involve parental consent since the law dictates that minors cannot be treated without their parent’s or guardian’s permission).

You’ll take one dose of the emergency contraceptive as soon as possible and another dose 12 hours later. When taken within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse, Plan B® is 89% effective for preventing pregnancy. It works by stopping ovulation, or inhibiting implantation of a fertilized egg. Plan B® is NOT the abortion pill (RU-486). Plan B® is not effective if you are already pregnant and is not harmful to an implanted embryo.

Campus Health offers Plan B® for \$29.95. The cost at Planned Parenthood of Southern Arizona is \$35. A recent phone survey of pharmacies around town came up with the following prices: Osco, Fry’s, and Safeway ranged from \$36.86-\$39.99 and Walgreen’s, Wal-Mart, and CVS varied from \$41.99-\$44.99.

In the future, to lessen the chance of condom breakage, use plenty of water-based lubrication on the outside of the condom or inside your vagina. Condoms are always recommended to prevent sexually transmitted infections.

Lastly, while “taking a break” from the pill may seem like a healthy idea to you, the risk of pregnancy increases significantly when you stop hormonal contraceptives and use methods you may not be as familiar with using. Consistent use of any chosen method leads to better pregnancy protection.

Have a question? Send it to sextalk@email.arizona.edu



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