

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

wildfact

Men and women can buy Plan B (emergency contraception) to have on hand when needed. No prescription is required.

Q I dropped one of my birth control pills down the sink. Is it better to skip that day, or take the next day's pill? When is it o.k. to miss a pill? When is the riskiest time to miss a pill?

A. You are probably not the first woman to have one go down the drain! If this was a placebo pill (the kind without hormones taken during the 4th week of the pill pack) you are in the clear with nothing to worry about.

However, if it was one of the hormone-containing pills during the first three weeks, immediately take a hormone-containing pill from one of your remaining days in the pack. When you get to the end of the 3rd week, you'll be short one pill. From this point forward (last pill of week #3), you have two options: 1) take the week of seven placebo pills and then start your next pill pack one day earlier than usual, or 2) start the next pill pack on your regularly scheduled starting day of the week (after 8 hormone-free days). You will have to use a back-up method of birth control (condoms + spermicide) or

abstinence during the first week in order to be protected from pregnancy.

While it's never "good" to miss a pill, there are riskier times than others, particularly during the first few days of a new pill pack. In general, if you just miss one pill, the protocol is to take the missed pill as soon as you can and continue taking your pills. No emergency contraception is needed, but a back-up method is recommended for seven days.

Two or more pills missed: Take one of the missed pills plus today's pill and finish your pack on regular schedule. Emergency Contraception is recommended. You must also use a back-up method (condoms + spermicide) or abstain from sex for the rest of the pack. As always, contact your medical provider or pharmacist for specific medication advice when in doubt.



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

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