

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

wildfact Wildcats (bobcats) are found only in North America.

Q Is it true you can take two regular birth control pills as emergency contraception?

A. Two tablets out of a monthly pack is not a high enough dose for effective Emergency Contraception (EC). Some oral contraceptive pills (OCPs) require taking four pills “now” and four pills 12 hours later. Each brand of birth control has very specific instructions to follow for EC use, if applicable, depending on the type and strength of hormone(s) used. For a helpful list of options and instructions for using OCPs as EC, go to www.not-2-late.com.

When a woman has unprotected sex (no condom or no birth control method used), taking an approved “morning after pill,” is a good course of action to reduce the chance of pregnancy.

Plan B and Next Choice brands of emergency contraception contain progestin. This hormone works by inhibiting ovulation and/or implantation of a fertilized egg. When taken within 72 hours (3 days) of a single act of unprotected intercourse, EC can reduce pregnancy risk by 75-89%. The sooner EC is taken, the higher its effectiveness. EC works best in the first 24 hours. It will not end a pregnancy if the fertilized egg has implanted

in the wall of the uterus. Plan B and Next Choice do not require a prescription and can be bought at pharmacies by men and women, 17 or older. Consider keeping a dose on hand... just in case. The cost for EC at the UA Campus Health Service is \$35. At Walgreens the cost is \$49-\$53.

While EC is a helpful option, especially in cases of sexual assault, unplanned or unprotected sex, it is not nearly as effective as the consistent use of hormonal birth control methods. Oral contraceptive pills, the Nuva-Ring, Implanon, and Depo-Provera are 98-99.7% effective in preventing pregnancy. EC is intended only for emergencies and should not be used as a regular method of birth control. Side effects may include nausea, abdominal pain, and menstrual changes.

“Ella,” a new brand of EC containing the drug ulipristal acetate, was approved by the FDA in August 2010. Entering U.S. markets in 2011, Ella is available by prescription only, and is more effective (for up to 5 days) than the progestin-only methods.



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

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