

SEXtalk)))

Answers to Your Questions about Sex and Relationships

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factoid

55% of UA students use condoms to decrease risk for STDs and unintended pregnancy (Wellness 2001, n=1220)

Q. What is Emergency Contraception and how effective is it?

- A.** Emergency contraception, or the “morning after pill,” is a combination of several contraceptive pills taken to prevent pregnancy. The prescription pills are administered in two separate doses within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse. Side effects can include nausea (30-50% of women), vomiting (15-25%), fatigue and changes in the next menstrual period.

Emergency contraception is not recommended for regular use because it is less effective (75% pregnancy protection) than regular hormonal contraceptives (98-99.5% protection). Emergency contraception is available at Campus Health for \$10.00. Pregnancy test kits are available for \$4.00. Call 621-6512.

Q. Is Emergency Contraception the same as the “abortion pill”?

- A.** No. Medical science defines the beginning of pregnancy as the implantation of a fertilized egg in the lining of a woman’s uterus. Emergency contraception works by stopping the release of an egg from the ovary or, in some cases, preventing a fertilized egg from implanting in the uterus. If a woman is already pregnant, emergency contraception will not abort the pregnancy.

The abortion drug mifepristone, or “Mifeprex” (called RU-486 in other countries), was approved for use in the U.S. this year. It is a combination of hormone pills taken 48 hours apart and can be taken up to 7 weeks from the date of last menstrual period. Mifeprex affects the lining of the uterus and causes a medical abortion in 95% of women. Cramping and pain may occur. Bleeding after treatment lasts an average of 9 days.

As with surgical abortion services, there are few local clinics that administer the abortion pill. Old Pueblo Family Planning and the downtown office of Planned Parenthood of Southern Arizona offer Mifeprex for \$495. Campus Health does not prescribe Mifeprex.

Reference: Contraceptive Technology Update, January 2001.

Sex Talk is written by Lee Ann Hamilton, M.A., C.H.E.S. & Melissa McGee, Ph.D., M.P.H., health educators at the University of Arizona Campus Health Service. Send your questions to “Sex Talk” c/o Health Promotion & Preventive Services, 200 W. Old Main or E-mail to sextalk@u.arizona.edu. “Sex Talk” appears every Monday. Paid by Campus Health Services.