

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

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The Campus Health Service now accepts Blue Cross/
Blue Shield. For insurance questions, call 621-5002.

Q How does plan B work? I've heard about it but I don't know the details.

A. Plan B, also known as the “morning after pill,” is taken after unprotected intercourse to prevent pregnancy. It is *not* the abortion pill, nor will it damage or stop an implanted pregnancy. Plan B One Step® is now the most common over-the-counter (OTC) emergency contraception (EC) on the market, containing just one pill. Plan B One Step® can reduce the risk of pregnancy by 75-89% if taken within 3 days (72 hours) of unprotected intercourse; if taken within 24 hours it's about 94% effective. Here's what you need to know: the sooner the pill is taken, the more effective it is.

Plan B One Step® contains the progestin hormone levonorgestrel – which is found in lower doses in some birth control pills. Depending on a women's menstrual cycle, it can work by:

- Delaying or preventing ovulation (the release of an egg)
- Altering the cervical mucus – thicker mucus makes it more difficult for sperm to move up into the uterus
- Altering the lining of the uterus – makes it more difficult for an egg to attach

There may be some temporary side effects including: headache, nausea, stomach pains, breast tenderness, and menstrual cycle changes.

For heterosexual partners, it's a good idea to have it on hand in case of unprotected intercourse, a broken condom, or if a backup method of birth control failed. Emergency contraception does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and should not be used as a regular birth control method. It's called “Plan B” for a reason.

Plan B One Step® can be purchased OTC by males and females age 17 and older. The Campus Health Pharmacy sells it for \$35. Ella® is another EC pill that is new on the market. It can be taken up to 5 days after intercourse. Ella® requires a prescription and costs \$41.90 at Campus Health. Have questions or want more information? Call 621-6516 to speak with our knowledgeable and friendly pharmacists.



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

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