

## **Fact Sheet and Instructions for Emergency Contraception (PCC)**

Post-coital contraception (PCC) are hormonal pills (similar to birth control pills) that you take in an attempt to try to prevent pregnancy after having unprotected vaginal intercourse (birth control method fails, no birth control used). The pills have been shown to be 80-90% effective in preventing pregnancy if used within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse. The pills can keep the ovary from releasing an egg, thicken cervical mucus, or change the lining of the uterus in such a way that a fertilized egg may not attach and develop into a pregnancy. PCC cannot interrupt the development of an already established pregnancy and does not cause an abortion. However, PCC can cause birth defects, and may not be used if you are already pregnant.

Some reactions to these pills (for about 24 hours) may include:

- nausea and/or vomiting
- breast tenderness
- irregular bleeding
- headache or dizziness

Your next period could be early or late, or could be lighter or heavier. If you use PCC more than once in a monthly cycle, the chances of having problems with your next period will be even greater. It is important to think of a more reliable form of ongoing birth control if you are at risk of unintended pregnancy. Available options can be discussed with Health Services staff. Having unprotected sex may have put you at risk for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and a serious infection could cause sterility. If you think you could be at risk for STIs, you should talk to your clinician about getting tested.

You should return to Health Services 3-4 weeks after taking these pills if you have not had a normal period, or if you feel like you could be pregnant, or if you have any early signs of pregnancy (such as feeling sick to your stomach, feeling very tired, breast swelling or tenderness).

### **Directions:**

- 1) Take the first dose as soon as possible after the episode of unprotected intercourse. Take with food to minimize nausea.
- 2) Take the second dose 12 hours later with food. To prevent feeling sick to your stomach or throwing up:
  - do not take the pills on an empty stomach
  - you can get something at a drugstore without a prescription (like Dramamine or Bonine) to take about an hour before taking the PCC if you want to.
  - if your stomach is very sensitive, ask Health Services about a prescription medication that you can take.
- 3) You should have withdrawal bleeding within 3 weeks of taking PCC. If you do not experience this, please contact Health Services to schedule an appointment for a pregnancy test.
- 4) Resume your contraceptive method as soon as PCC is completed. If you have any questions about this, please discuss this with Health Services staff.

5) If you are not currently using a reliable method of reliable contraception, please make an appointment to discuss this at Health Services. PCC is not as effective and has more side effects than some other forms of birth control.

6) Remember, PCC will not protect you from sexually transmitted infections. Condom use is the only method that provides some protection against them.

**Call Health Services at Ext. 5550 if you:**

- Have questions
- Think you have a problem
- Are so sick to your stomach or are throwing up so much that you can't take the second dose of pills

**Call us immediately or go to the Emergency Room if you have any early pregnancy danger signs, such as:**

- Possible tubal (ectopic) pregnancy, sudden pain, or pain that lasts, or strong cramps low in your abdomen, usually on one side with or without bleeding
  
- Fainting or dizziness that lasts more than a few seconds (could be a sign of bleeding in your abdomen)
  
- Possible miscarriage (heavy bleeding after a period that was late or light, sometimes with clots or bad cramps).
  
- Fever, or pain in your abdomen