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Is emergency contraception effective if I've had unprotected intercourse many times on one occasion? ^[1]

Alice,

The emergency contraceptive pill: Does the amount of times I have unprotected sex in one night alter the effectiveness of the emergency contraceptive pill? Will the pill work the same no matter how many times I have unprotected sex on one occasion?

Answer

Dear Reader,

For those who are unfamiliar: emergency contraception (EC) is a pregnancy prevention option that is taken after sex that occurs where a birth control method failed or was not used. If a woman has had sex more than once in one night (or one day), she does not need to take more than one course of EC following those acts of intercourse. EC pills are most effective if taken within 72 hours, but may remain effective up to 120 hours (five days) after sex (specifically from the time of the first sexual contact, if it happened more than once).

One-pill formulations of EC, like Plan B One-Step® and its generic versions, are now available on the retail shelves at pharmacies and drugstores in the United States, making it easier to get EC when you need it fast. For these formulations of EC, no prescription is needed and proof-of-age will not be required to purchase. It's good to note that EC does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Using condoms and/or exploring other sexual activities that involve less contact with semen and vaginal fluids (for example, outercourse) can help reduce the risk of STI transmission. For more information about EC, check out *Alice's* [emergency contraception archives](#) ^[2].

It may make sense to talk with a health care provider to look into an ongoing, reliable form of contraception. S/he can help you find the right one for you among the many choices available, such as birth control pills, the patch, a contraceptive ring, a contraceptive shot or implant, or an IUD. Speak with your regular health care provider, or visit a health center such as [Planned Parenthood](#) ^[3] or your local department of health clinic.

Best of luck finding a method that works best for you,

Alice!

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Published date:

Oct 17, 2003

Last reviewed on:

Apr 25, 2014

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