

Emergency contraception reduces the risk of pregnancy after unprotected sexual intercourse.

- **What does it involve?**

Emergency contraception (also known as the “morning after pill”) involves taking oral medication to reduce the risk of pregnancy following unprotected intercourse or if contraception fails (e.g., broken condom). These medications should be started as soon as possible after unprotected sex (there is no need to wait until the “morning after”). Use within 72 hours is recommended, although use can be considered for up to 120 hours (5 days). In general, the sooner they are used, the more effective they will be. Emergency contraception does not protect you from HIV or other sexually transmitted infections. Insertion of a copper IUD is another option but is not generally available in Japan.

- **How effective is it?**

Effectiveness is difficult to measure accurately, as it depends on many factors, including timing of use in relation to ovulation. In general, the expected pregnancy rate for women considering emergency contraception has been estimated to be 4 ~ 8%. The use of emergency contraception may reduce this to roughly 2%. Effectiveness decreases with time, although ulipristal (ella<sup>®</sup>) may maintain effectiveness for up to 120 hours.

- **How do I get the medication?**

In Japan, these medications are currently available by prescription only, so you will need to visit a doctor to obtain a prescription. NorLevo<sup>®</sup> (levonorgestrel) is the only product approved specifically for emergency contraception in Japan. In addition, several brands of standard oral contraceptives and hormonal pills have traditionally been, and continue to be, used “off-label” for this purpose. Although not on the market in Japan, ella<sup>®</sup> (ulipristal) has been approved in Europe since 2009 and in the United States since 2010. Primary Care Tokyo is able to offer this product by importing it. For otherwise healthy individuals, no physical/pelvic examination or blood/urine tests are required prior to prescription.

- **How does it work?**

The most recent evidence indicates that the primary effect of these medications is to delay or prevent ovulation. Some of the medications may also interfere with implantation. Currently available evidence indicates that these medications do not interfere with an implanted pregnancy.

- **Are there side effects?**

Currently available products used for emergency contraception are extremely safe. No deaths or serious side effects have been reported, and products similar to NorLevo<sup>®</sup> are available over-the-counter in many countries. Common side effects include nausea, abdominal pain, breast tenderness, headache, and dizziness. For most women, these effects are mild. If vomiting occurs after taking the medication, contact your doctor, as a repeat dose may be necessary. Most women can take these medications safely, but please tell your doctor if you are taking other medications or are currently breastfeeding.

- **What should I expect after taking the pills?**

Most women will have their next menses within 7 days of the expected time. If this does not happen, please consult your doctor. Emergency contraception does not protect you from pregnancy during subsequent acts of sexual intercourse so other forms of birth control should be used.

## PRIMARY CARE TOKYO EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION OPTIONS

TYPE OF MEDICATION	PRODUCT NAME	RECOMMENDED TIMING	DOSE	COST† (tax not included)	NOTES
COMBINED [Estrogen & Progestin]	Planovar® (ethinyl estradiol 50mcg + norgestrel 0.5 mg)	0 ~ 72 hours*	2 tablets/dose 12 hours apart (total of 4 tablets)	Consultation ¥3,000 Medication ¥400	Dispensed at clinic
PROGESTIN-ONLY	NorLevo® (levonorgestrel 1.5 mg)	0 ~ 72 hours*	1 tablet in a single dose	Consultation ¥3,000 Medication ¥15,000~ (cost will vary depending on pharmacy filling prescription)	Prescription issued for filling at a prescription pharmacy
ANTI-PROGESTIN	ella® (ulipristal acetate 30mg)	0 ~ 120 hours	1 tablet in a single dose	Consultation ¥3,000 Medication ¥6,500	Dispensed at clinic. Not approved in Japan. Please call to confirm availability.

\*May be considered for use up to 120 hours.

†Prices are subject to change without notice.