

AN OPTION IN THE CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

The morning after pill



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Forgotten to take the pill, a ruptured condom or a displaced vaginal ring – Mistakes and mishaps can quickly occur with contraception in everyday life. Then it is good to know what to do to avoid an unwanted pregnancy.

It is possible to become pregnant after a contraceptive mishap. Sperm can survive in a woman's body for up to 5 days. If ovulation occurs during this time, fertilisation is possible.

Here the **morning after pill** (or the **morning after coil**) can help as emergency contraception. If taken in good time, the morning after pill can still prevent ovulation or delay it for a few days so that fertilisation does not occur. The sperm die before ovulation and so "miss" the egg.



React as quickly as possible: Emergency contraception can only work if you do not wait too long after a contraceptive mishap. It is best to take the morning after pill the same day or the next day.



Get advice from a pharmacist or doctor (if you can get an appointment no later than the next day) as to whether the morning after pill (or the morning after coil) makes sense in your situation.



Forgotten to take the pill? Contraceptive protection is not immediately at risk each time you forget to take the pill. The online test “Forgotten to take the pill – what can I do?” tells you what you can do in your specific case.



Forgotten to take the pill – what can I do?

← To the online test



If contraceptive mishaps occur repeatedly, it would be good to consider whether you may be better suited to another contraceptive method.



Which contraception is suitable for me?

← To the online test

How does the morning after pill work?

The morning after pill can prevent or delay imminent ovulation so that the sperm does not find an egg ready to be fertilised. But it must be taken in good time before ovulation.

There are two types of medication with different active ingredients. The type with Levonorgestrel is effective if it is taken at least two days before ovulation, and Ulipristal acetate is effective one day before ovulation.

The more time that passes, the greater the risk that ovulation will occur and the morning after pill will no longer work. It is therefore best to take the morning after pill as soon as possible after unprotected sex.

Being severely overweight may reduce the effectiveness of the morning after pill. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about a suitable method of emergency contraception for you.

When does the morning after pill not work?

If ovulation has already started or has already taken place, the morning after pill will no longer work.

If ovulation occurs and also fertilisation of an egg, it will settle in the uterus a few days later. The morning after pill cannot then terminate this pregnancy. The morning after pill is therefore not an “abortion pill” (with which it is often confused).

Attention:

Since the morning after pill may only delay ovulation, you may become pregnant again a few days later – in the same cycle. It is therefore essential to continue to use contraception until your next period (using your usual method or condoms, for example).

Where can I get the morning after pill and how much does it cost?

The morning after pill can be purchased from a pharmacy without a prescription. It costs between €13 and €40 depending on the type of medication (as of May 2024). A free consultation is also offered at a pharmacy. For example, you can discuss whether you may already be pregnant or whether it may have an effect on other medication.

For women with statutory insurance, the costs will be covered by the health insurance company up until their 22nd birthday – but only if they have the morning after pill prescribed by a doctor before they purchase it at a pharmacy. The health insurance companies do not reimburse the costs retrospectively. A statutory co-payment has to be paid with a prescription from the age of 18.

If you have private insurance, it is best to ask the health insurance company what costs it will cover.

It may be that individual pharmacies refuse to sell the morning after pill. In this case, it is best to go to another pharmacy. An emergency service is available at pharmacies during the night or at weekends. You can find out on the Internet, by telephone or through a notice in the window which pharmacy offers an emergency service in the area. ►

Another option is the medical or gynaecological outpatient clinic at the nearest hospital.

What about if I use the contraceptive pill or another hormonal contraceptive?

Continue to take the pill as usual after taking the morning after pill. It is best to use additional contraception, such as condoms, until your next period.

The same applies if you use a contraceptive patch or a vaginal ring.

How do I know if the morning after pill has worked?

In general, the arrival of your normal period (menstruation) on the expected date (or slightly later) is a sign that you are not pregnant. However, your period does not provide absolute certainty as it may also be spotting.

If you are unsure, it is best to take a pregnancy test, either at the time that you expect your period or at the latest when your period is more than a week overdue.

What side effects are possible?

Side effects are possible after taking the morning after pill, as with any medication. These include headaches, nausea and abdominal pain. Spotting, breast tenderness and vomiting may also occur. Some women may feel dizzy or light-headed after taking it, so your ability to drive may be impaired.

As there may be side effects in combination with other medication, it is important to ask about this at a pharmacy. You can also get clarification at a pharmacy or doctor's practice as to whether the morning after pill should or should not be taken due to illness.

If pain occurs after taking the morning after pill, it is best to talk to a doctor.



Still have questions about the morning after pill?

← More information can be found here.

LEGAL NOTICE

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