Te Whatu Ora
Health New Zealand
Waitaha Canterbury

LEVONORGESTREL (Emergency Contraceptive Pill)

lee-voe-nor-jes-trel

What does it do?

The Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP) is used to prevent pregnancy after you have had unprotected sex. This includes contraceptive failure such as a condom breaking or missing your regular contraception.
See Sexual Wellbeing Aotearoa for more information.

Before you start

- Tell your health professional if your last period was more than 5 days late, or if it was light or unusual in any way.
- Tell your health professional if you are breastfeeding.
- If you weigh more than 70 kg the ECP may not prevent pregnancy. The most effective emergency contraception is a copper IUD. If this is not an option for you, you will be offered a double dose: two tablets (3 mg) instead of one (1.5 mg).

How should you take it?

Take the ECP as soon as possible (up to 72 hours) after unprotected sex.

Sometimes the ECP can make you feel sick or vomit. Taking it with food may help prevent this. If you vomit or have severe diarrhoea within 3 hours of taking the ECP, you will need to take another dose.

Can you take other medicines?

Tell your pharmacist or doctor about all medicines or treatments that you may be taking, including vitamins, herbal products (e.g. St John's wort) or recreational drugs.

What side effects might you notice?

Side Effects	Recommended action
Vomiting or severe diarrhoea	If within 3 hours, you will need to get another dose.
Changes in periods Nausea, stomach cramps Sore breasts Headache, dizziness, tiredness or weakness	Tell your health professional if troublesome

If you notice any other effects, discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist.

Other information:

- Most women should get their next period around the usual time (it might be a few days early or late). Contact your health professional, or do a pregnancy test, if your next period is more than 5 days late, unusual in any way, or if you think you might be pregnant.
- The ECP is for emergency use only and not suitable for regular contraception. Talk to your health professional about options for regular contraception. If you are already using regular contraception, continue this as normal.
- The ECP does not protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs). If you've had unprotected sex, it's a good idea to get an STI check.
- Taking the ECP doesn't make it harder to get pregnant if you want to later on.