Emergency contraception can be used to reduce the risk of pregnancy after unprotected sex.

Emergency contraception pills are readily available, without prescription, from most chemists. They are commonly called the morning-after pill, are most effective if started within 24 hours after unprotected sex, but can be used up to 5 days later. The sooner they are taken, the better.

Methods of EC available in Australia are:

- Emergency contraceptive pills
- Diaphragm
- Sterilisation
- Breastfeeding
- Natural methods of contraception

Emergency contraception pills are available from FPQ clinics, some doctors, gynaecologists and fertility clinics.

Diaphragm

The diaphragm is a cone-shaped latex rubber cap, worn in the vagina during and after sexual intercourse to reduce the risk of pregnancy. Diaphragms are available in different sizes and there are two types available – arcing or coil spring.

The diaphragm works by:

- Fitting inside the vagina to cover the cervix, providing a barrier to prevent sperm entering the uterus (womb) after ejaculation

Diaphragms may be bought from FPQ clinics and most chemists once the correct size and type is known.

Sterilisation

Sterilisation is a permanent method of contraception. Female sterilisation involves blocking the Fallopian tubes to stop the passage of the ovum. Both surgical and non-surgical methods are available. Male sterilisation (vasectomy) involves an operation on the vas deferens to prevent the passage of sperm.

More information about sterilisation is available from FPQ clinics or your doctor.

Breastfeeding – Lactational Amenorrhoea (LAM)

Breastfeeding has an effect on the production of hormones that reduces the probability of ovulation (egg release) occurring, therefore reducing the chance of a pregnancy.

Contact an FPQ clinic or your doctor for more information or advice.

Natural methods of contraception

Methods of contraception do not rely on the use of hormones or devices and include the following:

- Fertility Awareness Based Methods (FABMs) use awareness of the fertile phase in the menstrual cycle to indicate when sexual intercourse should be avoided to prevent pregnancy.
- Spermicides
- Progestin only pills
- Long-acting reversible contraception (LARC)
- Male condom
- Female condom

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Contraception means prevention of pregnancy. It is a number of different methods of contraception which is naturally produced by the female body.

The POP works by:
- thickening of the mucous of the cervix so that sperm cannot enter the uterus (womb).

The POP can be used by most women, even if they have any significant health issues, but relies on regular and consistent daily use to be effective. It is available on prescription from FPQ clinics or your doctor.

The female condom is a polyurethane sheath, which is inserted into the vagina and used with a male condom. It is about 15cm long and has two flexible rings to keep it in place in the vagina. The female condom is 70-95% effective.

Condoms work by:
- acting as a physical barrier that stops body fluids or sperm from moving into or out of the body. They can be only condoms offer protection from both unintended pregnancy and STIs.

The combined oral contraceptive pill (COC) contains two hormones – oestrogen and a progestogen. These are similar to the hormones naturally produced by the female body and the same as those used in the combined oral contraceptive (The Pill).

Combined oral contraceptive pill (The Pill)

The combined oral contraceptive pill (COC) commonly referred to as ‘The Pill’ is an oral contraceptive taken daily. It contains the hormones oestrogen and progestogen. These are similar to the hormones normally produced by the female body. The Pill may help with a regular menstrual cycle.

The Pill mainly works by:
- preventing ovulation (egg release from the ovary)
- preventing sperm from moving through the uterus and fertilising an egg.

The POP relies on regular and consistent daily use to be effective. It is available on prescription from FPQ clinics or your doctor.

The contraceptive implant – Implanon NXT®

Implanon NXT® is a flexible rod, which is inserted in the inner arm above the elbow, which continuously releases a low dose of a progestogen similar to the one naturally produced by the female body into the bloodstream. This can prevent pregnancy for up to 3 years. Devices need to be replaced every 3 years or can be removed earlier if required.

The implant works by:
- preventing ovulation (egg release from the ovary)
- preventing sperm from moving through the uterus and fertilising an egg.

Implants are 95.9% effective and are available from FPQ clinics and other doctors who have had training in implant insertion and removal.

The Cu-IUD works by:
- changing the lining of the uterus, making it unsuitable for pregnancy
- preventing sperm from moving through the uterus and fertilising an egg.
- preventing ovulation (egg release from the ovary)

Cu-IUDs are 99.2% effective and are available from FPQ clinics as well as gynaecologists and some doctors.

The Cu-IUD is a small device made from plastic and copper that is fitted inside the uterus. There are 2 types of copper IUDs available in Australia – the Multiload Cu 375® and the TV 395®. They can be used as contraception for 5 or 10 years respectively and can be easily removed at any time. They have no hormones and therefore no effect on the normal female cycle but periods may become heavier.

The Cu-IUD works by:
- preventing sperm from moving through the uterus and fertilising an egg.
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The progestogen releasing intrauterine system – Mirena

Mirena® is a small T-shaped device made of plastic that is placed inside the uterus (womb), where it slowly releases a very low dose of progesterone to prevent pregnancy for up to 5 years. Periods usually become lighter or may stop when using a hormonal IUD.

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