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

Emergency contraceptive pills, 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**
- **Buffered aspirin**
- **IUD**
- **Sterilisation**
- **Natural methods of contraception**

Emergency contraception pills are readily available, without prescription, from most chemists. They are also 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 – arco 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.

Where to get help and advice about contraception

- **Family planning clinics**
- **Sexual health clinics**
- **Women’s health centres**
- **Youth health centres**
- **Your local doctor**
- **www.fpq.com.au**

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Contraception means preventing pregnancy, and it is a number one item in contraception and it is important to choose that one that best meets your needs. Using a method you are happy with means you will be able to enjoy sex without the worry of an unintended pregnancy.

So what method to use?

Considerations when choosing contraception should include accurate information about:

- effectiveness in pregnancy prevention health issues which may affect contraception choices
ease of use side effects including changes to usual periods benefits other than contraception reversibility protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

The most effective reversible methods are the "fit and forget" long acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) – intrauterine devices (IUDs) and contraceptive implants.

Talking with your local Family Planning Queensland (FPQ) clinic or your doctor about all methods will ensure that you have enough information to choose the one that suits you best. You can also refer to FPQ’s contraception fact sheets or web big.com.au for more details on individual contraceptive methods.

The contraceptive implant – Implanon NXT®

Implanon NXT® is a small flexible rod, which is inserted in the inner arm above the elbow, which continuously releases a low dose of a progestogen (similar to the hormone progesterone) naturally produced by the female body into the bloodstream to prevent pregnancy for up to 3 years. Device removal can be within 7 days or can be removed earlier if required.

The implant works by:

- preventing ovulation (egg release from the ovary)
- thickening of the mucus of the cervix so that sperm cannot enter the uterus

Implants are 99.9% effective and are available from FPQ clinics and other doctors who have had training in implant insertion and removal.

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 progestogen to prevent pregnancy for up to 5 years. Periods usually become lighter or may stop when using a hormonal IUD.

Mirena® works by:

- thinning the lining of the uterus, making it unusable for pregnancy
- thickening the mucus of the cervix so that sperm cannot enter the uterus

The hormonal IUD is 99.9% effective and is available from FPQ clinics as gynaecologists and some doctors.

Copper intrauterine contraceptive device (Cu-IUD)

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 Multidose Cu 375™ and the TT 380™. They can be used as contraception for 5 or 10 years respectively and can be easily removed at any time.

The Cu-IUD works by:

- preventing sperm from moving through the uterus
- preventing implantation of a fertilised ovum (egg)
- thickening of the mucus of the cervix so that sperm cannot enter the uterus

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

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 naturally produced by the female body. The Pill may help with acne and heavy periods.

The Pill mainly works by:

- preventing ovulation (egg release from the ovary)
- thickening of the mucus of the cervix so that sperm cannot enter the uterus

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

The contraceptive vaginal ring – NuvaRing®

NuvaRing® is a soft, plastic ring which releases low daily doses of two hormones, oestrogen and a progestogen, into the bloodstream. These hormones similar to those naturally produced by the female body and the same as those used in the combined oral contraceptive (The Pill). NuvaRing® mainly works by:

- preventing ovulation (egg release from the ovary)
- thickening of the mucus of the cervix so that sperm cannot enter the uterus

NuvaRing® works by:

- the ring being expelled and remains in the vagina for 3 weeks and is then removed and replaced with the next ring a week later. NuvaRing® is available on a prescription from FPQ clinics or your doctor.

The POP works by:

- thickening of the mucus of the cervix so that sperm cannot enter the uterus

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.

Condoms – male and female

The male condom is a sheath made of thin, strong, latex rubber or polyurethane, which is rolled onto the erect penis. Male condoms are 82-98% effective for pregnancy prevention and consistent and correct use is the sole method of contraception. Condoms can be used in conjunction with other methods to increase contraceptive effectiveness.

The female condom is a polyurethane sheath, which is inserted into the vagina before sexual intercourse. It is about 15cm long and has two flexible rings to keep it in position in the vagina. The female condom is 70-93% effective.

Condoms work by:

- acting as a physical barrier that stops body fluids (e.g semen, vaginal fluids) passing between sexual partners. They can only be used once.

Remember... even if you are using another method of contraception, only condoms offer protection from both unintended pregnancy and STIs.