Emergency Contraception

If you have had unprotected sex or your birth control method fails, you still have a chance to prevent pregnancy. There are two different types of emergency contraceptive pills available in the United States: progestin-only (Plan B One-Step) and ulipristal acetate (ella). Both types are effective and both work primarily by delaying or inhibiting ovulation. Both types of emergency contraception are available in Health Services on campus. There is a fee for both of these medications which will be billed to your student account.

Here are some important differences between these types of pills:

- *Plan B One-Step* is available directly at the pharmacy with no restrictions. *ella* is available by prescription only.
- *ella* is more effective than progestin-only pills like *Plan B One-Step*, particularly on the 5th day after sex, when progestin-only emergency contraception may not be effective.
- *ella* is effective closer to the time of ovulation than *Plan B One-Step*, and this is the time when women are most at risk of pregnancy and most likely to be having sex.
- *ella* may be more effective for overweight or obese women.
Here are some things to consider when choosing an emergency contraceptive pill:

- **Effectiveness:** *ella* is more effective than progestin-only emergency contraceptive (*Plan B One-Step*), particularly on the 5th day after sex.

- **Your body weight:** There is evidence that progestin-only emergency contraception (*Plan B One-Step*) may be less likely to work for women with a body mass index of 26 or more. If you are overweight, you may want to consider using *ella* or a copper IUD.

- **Timing since unprotected sex:** Sperm can live in the body for 5 days after sex. Research shows that *ella* is effective up to 5 days after unprotected sex, while progestin-only emergency contraception (*Plan B One-Step*) may be effective only through the 4th day. If it has been 4 or 5 days since you had unprotected sex, try to make an extra effort to get a prescription for *ella* or a copper IUD.

- **Your cycle:** Although studies show that emergency contraception can work up to 120 hours after sex, what matters for each individual woman is where you are in your menstrual cycle. *ella* works closer to the time of ovulation than progestin-only emergency contraception (although most likely neither will work if you have already ovulated). If you think you might be close to ovulation, or don't know where you are in your cycle, *ella* may be the best choice. If you can’t get a prescription for *ella* in time, but you can get to the pharmacy, it’s still a good idea to get progestin-only emergency contraception over-the-counter and take it as soon as possible.

- **The calendar:** If it is a weekend or holiday, your best option may be to get *Plan B One-Step* from the pharmacy, as Health Services is not open or health care provider’s office may not be open to provide you with a prescription for *ella*.

- **Availability:** Not all pharmacies carry emergency contraception. Call ahead to find out which brands your pharmacy has in stock. Some pharmacies still do not stock *ella*, so you may find it easier to get progestin-only emergency contraception.

If you have had unprotected sex, **take action right away** and find out what your options are. If you are sexually active, it’s always a good idea to have emergency contraception available in case you need it. You can ask your health care provider for a prescription to keep on hand until you need it, or purchase emergency contraception at the pharmacy to keep at home.

- CVS Pharmacy, 45 Franklin Tpke., Mahwah, NJ  201-529-5930
- CVS Pharmacy, 259 N. Franklin Tpke., Ramsey, NJ  201-327-9430
- CVS Pharmacy, 5 Indian Rock, Suffern, NY  845-357-1500
- Oakland Drugs, 373 Ramapo Valley Road, Oakland, NJ  201-337-7300
- Walgreens Pharmacy, 409 Ramapo Valley Road, Oakland, NJ  201-337-2349
Emergency contraception is available for female students at Health Services. An appointment is required. Emergency contraception will only be dispensed for the person for whom the medication is intended. It will not be dispensed to any other person. Health Services is staffed by Nurse Practitioners. In the State of New Jersey, Nurse Practitioners can only dispense medication to the patient for whom it is intended. If you are the significant other or a friend of the patient, you can go to a local pharmacy to purchase the Plan B One Step as a Pharmacist can dispense to someone other than the patient. However, ella does require a prescription so you will need to see the Nurse Practitioner.

You can schedule your appointment by calling 201-684-7536. The medical staff will need to know when the incident occurred so that the appointment can be scheduled for you as soon as possible. In most cases the patient will be seen within 24 hours of the request for the appointment.

During the appointment, the female student will sign an informed consent in regards to the emergency contraception indicating that they understand how these medications work as well as the side effects of the medication. The medical provider will also ask the female student a series of questions in regards to the request for emergency contraception. If indicated, the medication will be dispensed to the female student.