



What you  
should  
know about  
using

## EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

Latin America Consortium  
for Emergency Contraception



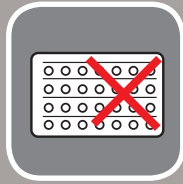
[www.clae.info](http://www.clae.info)



## What is Oral Emergency Contraception?

Oral emergency contraception (OEC) are contraceptive pills that women can take to prevent pregnancy within 120 hours (5 days) of having unprotected sex.

OEC is more effective the sooner it is taken. It becomes less effective as time passes.



## When do you use OEC?

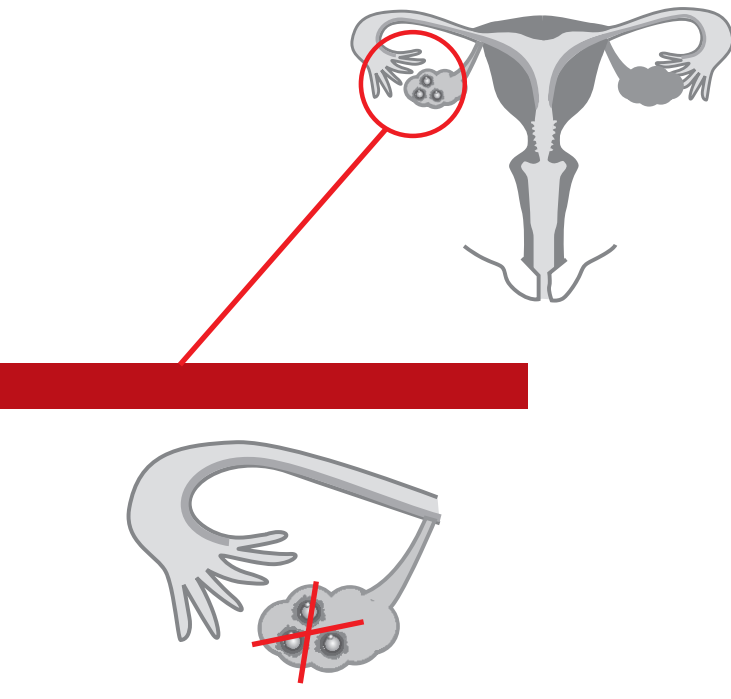
- If you've had sex and did not use a reliable form of contraception (i.e. injections, pills, condoms or other),
- If your contraceptive method was not used correctly,
- If you forgot to take your oral contraceptive pills for three days in a row,
- If the condom slipped off or broke,
- If you did not get your quarterly injection within the 4-week window
- If you are not sure how effective your contraceptive method is
- If you have been raped
- If you received your monthly injection more than 7 days late

# How does OEC work?

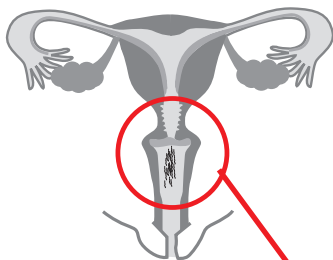
In two ways:

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1. It **prevents or delays ovulation**, so there is no egg to be fertilized

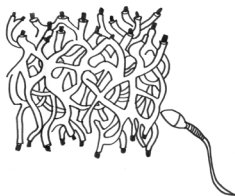


2. It thickens the **cervical mucus**, preventing the sperm from getting to the fallopian tubes.



#### CHANGE IN THE SPERM'S PATHWAY

THIN MUCUS WITHOUT OEC VS. DENSE (THICK) MUCUS WITH OEC



Fuente: Horacio Croxatto. Instituto Chileno de  
Medicina Reproductiva. Marzo 2001

Both ways prevent FERTILIZATION (the union of the egg and sperm).

For more information about how this works go to:

[www.clae.info/downloads/flash/prepildora.swf](http://www.clae.info/downloads/flash/prepildora.swf)

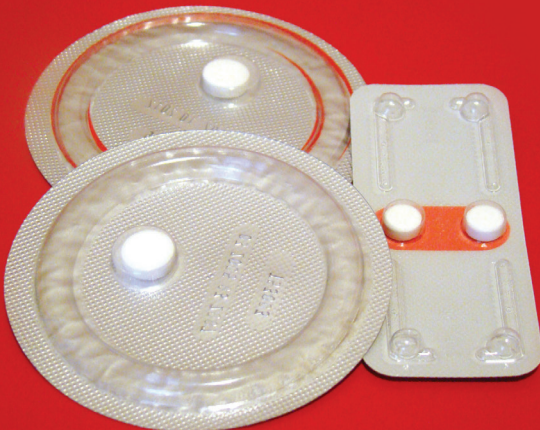
# How do you use OEC?

Pills that contain only levonorgestrel or a combination of pills of entinil-estradiol and pills of levonorgestrel should be taken. These are the same hormones found in oral contraceptive pills.

Regimen for levonorgestrel: It can be done in two ways:

**Dedicated product:** You can take one dose of 0.75 mg levonorgestrel (LNG) followed by a second dose of 0.75 mg LNG 12 hours later. You must start taking the first dose within 120 of unprotected sex.

A newer option is to take one dose of 1.5 mg LNG, which is just as effective as taking two doses of 0.75 mg LNG. This can be much more convenient because there is no second dose to forget.





### **Combined regimen** (Yuzpe Method)

This regimen has been the most widely used since OEC was released.

You can take 0.1 mg of entinil-estradiol and 0.5 mg of levonorgestrel. Then take another 0.1 mg of entinil-estradiol and 0.5 mg of levonorgestrel 12 hours later. You must start the first dose within 120 hours of unprotected sex.

There are dedicated products for this regimen that contain these exact doses and are easy to use. Another alternative is to take 4 oral contraceptive pills that contain 0.03 mg of entinil-estradiol and 0.015 mg of levonorgestrel.

The number of pills depends of the brand that is available (see the following table).

**ORAL CONTRACEPTIVE PILLS: THE MOST COMMON BRANDS**

COMMON BRANDS	1ST DOSE	2ND DOSE
Eugynon 50, Fertilan, Neogynon, Noral, Nordiol, Ovral, Neovlar, Evanor, Normamor	2	2
Lo/Femenal, Microgynon 30, Nordette, Ovral L, Rigevidon, Microvlar, Ciclo21, Cidlon, Gestrelan, Nociclin, Anulette, Norvetal, Innova, Microfemin	4	4
Dedicated products: Imediat-N, Levonelle-2, NorLevo, PlanB, Postinor-2, Vikela, Vika Pozato, Pilen, TACE		
en dosis unica	2	-
en dos dosis	1	1

Abbreviations: EE=Ethinil-Estradiol

LNG=Levonorgestrel

NG=Norgestrel

For all regimens, the first dose must be taken as soon as possible within 5 days of having unprotected sex, and the second dose must be taken 12 hours after the first dose.

LNG can be taken in a single dose of 1.5 mg. However, taking a single dose of the combined method has not been tested – side effects may be severe.

Adapted from Expanding Global Access to Emergency Contraception. Consortium of Emergency Contraception, 2001.

For more information about EOC products in the different countries go to: [www.clae.info/listado-de-productos-anticonceptivos.html](http://www.clae.info/listado-de-productos-anticonceptivos.html)

The sooner you take EOC the more effective it is in preventing pregnancy. The following chart shows how the effectiveness of EOC changes as time passes between unprotected sex and taking EOC.

	YUZPE	LNG
Up to 24 hours	75.0%	95.0%
25 – 48 hours	48.8%	85.0%
49 – 72 hours	41.3%	66.3%
Overall	60.0%	86.3%





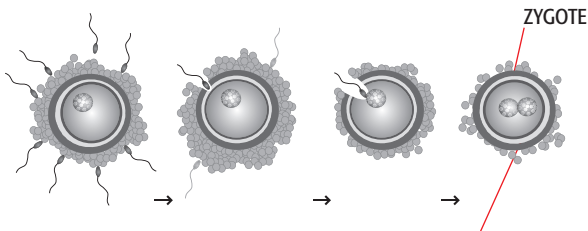
## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT USING EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

OEC, like other contraceptive methods, is not 100% protective, but it does lower the risk of getting pregnant by 75-88%.

Of 100 women who have sex without using contraception in the second and third week of their cycle, 8 may become pregnant if they do not take OEC while only 1-3 may become pregnant if they take OEC.

It's much easier to get pregnant after ovulation since the ovaries have released a mature egg. Ovulation usually occurs 14 to 16 days before your next menstrual period.

### THE PROCESS OF FERTILIZATION



The first genetic exchange occurs 72 hours after the sperm penetrates the egg.



## What are the side effects of EOC?

In some cases side effects can occur but should not last longer than 24 hours. They include: nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness or breast tenderness. Medication that prevents nausea (anti-emetics), which is sold over the counter, can be taken an hour before each dose.

If vomiting occurs within 2 hours of taking EOC, the dose should be repeated.

EOC may change menstrual cycle lengths, and your next period may come a week early or a week late. If your period is over a week late, a pregnancy test is recommended.

Some women get a little bleeding after taking EOC, but this should not be confused with a menstrual period. EOC only is only effective for a single occurrence of unprotected sex. If you are sexually active and do not want to get pregnant, it is important that you use a contraceptive method meant to be taken on a regular basis.

EOC does not protect against sexually transmitted infections, including HIV & AIDS. Condoms are recommended.

If you have any of the following symptoms, we recommend that you see a physician:

- Severe abdominal pain
- Absence of your menstrual period
- Dizziness

## More information about EOC

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) there is no contraindication for EOC use.

It is medication that is:

- Very safe.
- More effective the sooner you take it.
- Easy to take if instructions are followed.

And there is no:

- Need to adjust the dose for each person.
- Risk of overdose or addiction.
- Need for a physical or gynecological exam nor pregnancy test before use.

## References

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