

GUIDELINE: FACILITATING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILL

POSTPIL

ALWAYS BY YOUR SIDE

Emergency Contraceptive Pill



* Product information can be found on the back page.





SUPPORTING CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS:

Going to a pharmacy and asking for an emergency contraceptive pill can be challenging and difficult for many women. Despite its safety and ease of use, there are still barriers and misunderstandings surrounding the subject, such as the mistaken belief that it may cause long-term effects on health and fertility or that it is abortive. None of these are true.

The use of emergency contraception methods, like **Postpil**, are reliable ways of preventing unintended pregnancies. Women often lack awareness and accurate information about emergency contraception, leading to misconceptions. This places the responsibility of discussing the method on pharmacists and healthcare professionals.

HOW CAN A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER OFFER BETTER GUIDANCE ON HOW TO USE EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILLS?

This guidance will address all your questions about **Postpil** and emergency contraceptive pills to better serve patients' needs.

A GUIDE TO HAVING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT EMERGENCY HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION

To support pharmacists and healthcare professionals this booklet has been designed to **facilitate conversations about emergency contraceptive pills (ECP) in day-to-day practice**. It covers the clinical aspects of **Postpil®**, such as its efficacy and mechanism of action, while also providing guidance on addressing common scenarios.

Our mission is to remove these taboos. **We want every woman to understand that they are not alone and should feel no shame in using ECP.** To accomplish this, we will explore different scenarios you may encounter as a health care provider when patients ask about emergency contraception. We can assist you by providing useful techniques to help your patients gain a better understanding of the method, feel more at ease, and reduce stress while purchasing emergency contraception.



LEARNING POINTS:

- Learn how to handle conversations with different types of patients seeking emergency contraceptive pills.
- Explanation of what **Postpil®** is, its key features, and how it works.
- Explore effective communication tools to build trust with patients.
- Familiarize yourself with common misconceptions and myths about emergency contraceptive pills and how to address them.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT POSTPIL?

To effectively communicate with those seeking emergency contraceptive pills, it's important to first understand what it is, how it works, and its effectiveness.

Postpil is an emergency contraceptive pill designed to prevent pregnancy after sexual intercourse if a woman is concerned about the possibility of becoming pregnant. It is used in cases of known or suspected contraceptive failure, such as condom breakage, missed contraceptive pills or injections, or sexual assault.

Postpil contains 1 tablet of 1.5mg levonorgestrel and is most effective when taken as soon as possible after unprotected sex. **Postpil** should be taken orally no later than 72 hours (3 days) after unprotected sex to be effective.



Postpil is more than 97% effective in preventing pregnancy.¹

THIS REGIME IS RECOMMENDED BY THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION AS A SAFE EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION METHOD.





WHO CAN USE IT?

- **Postpil** can be used by **any woman of any age** who wishes to avoid pregnancy, including adolescents, women who are breastfeeding, or women with a history of ectopic pregnancy. Due to its short-term action, it is even suitable for women who cannot take hormonal contraception.²
- **Postpil** should not be taken more than once within 24 hours, except if the woman vomits within 2 hours after use. **Postpil** does not prevent pregnancy if there is repeated unprotected intercourse within 24 hours after taking the pill.

Postpil is intended for occasional use only and should not replace regular contraceptive methods. For more information and to explore additional contraceptive options, you can visit <https://dktwomancare.org/>.

POSTPIL MECHANISM OF ACTION:



1. The woman should take **Postpil** orally as soon as possible after unprotected sex. The pill has to be **taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex.**



2. **Postpil** works by preventing or delaying the release of an egg.

- Be aware that the woman's period may come a few days earlier or later than usual after taking the pill.
- Side effects are typically mild and uncommon but can include nausea, vomiting, irregular vaginal bleeding and fatigue.

After familiarizing yourself with the product, let's consider some common scenarios.

SCENARIO 1

WHEN THE PATIENT IS SHY:

Women who feel embarrassed, anxious, or judged when asking for an emergency contraceptive pill.

Many women feel shy when buying emergency contraception due to societal stigmas, fear of judgment, unfamiliarity with the process, or even emotional vulnerability. As a healthcare provider, you can look for certain signs and behaviors that may indicate a woman is feeling shy or uncomfortable when asking for an ECP.

- **Hesitation:** The woman may hesitate before approaching the counter or initiating the conversation, appearing unsure.
- **Nervous body language:** She might avoid making direct eye contact or show nervous eye movements, like looking down or around. People who are shy often exhibit fidgety behaviors, such as shifting weight from one foot to the other, playing with their hands, or crossing and uncrossing their arms.
- **Quick and discreet request:** She may make the request in a low-key manner, trying to minimize attention or avoid drawing further attention to herself.

- **What to do:**

Use respectful and inclusive language: Employ language that is sensitive, respectful, and inclusive when discussing emergency contraception. Avoid making assumptions or using judgmental statements.

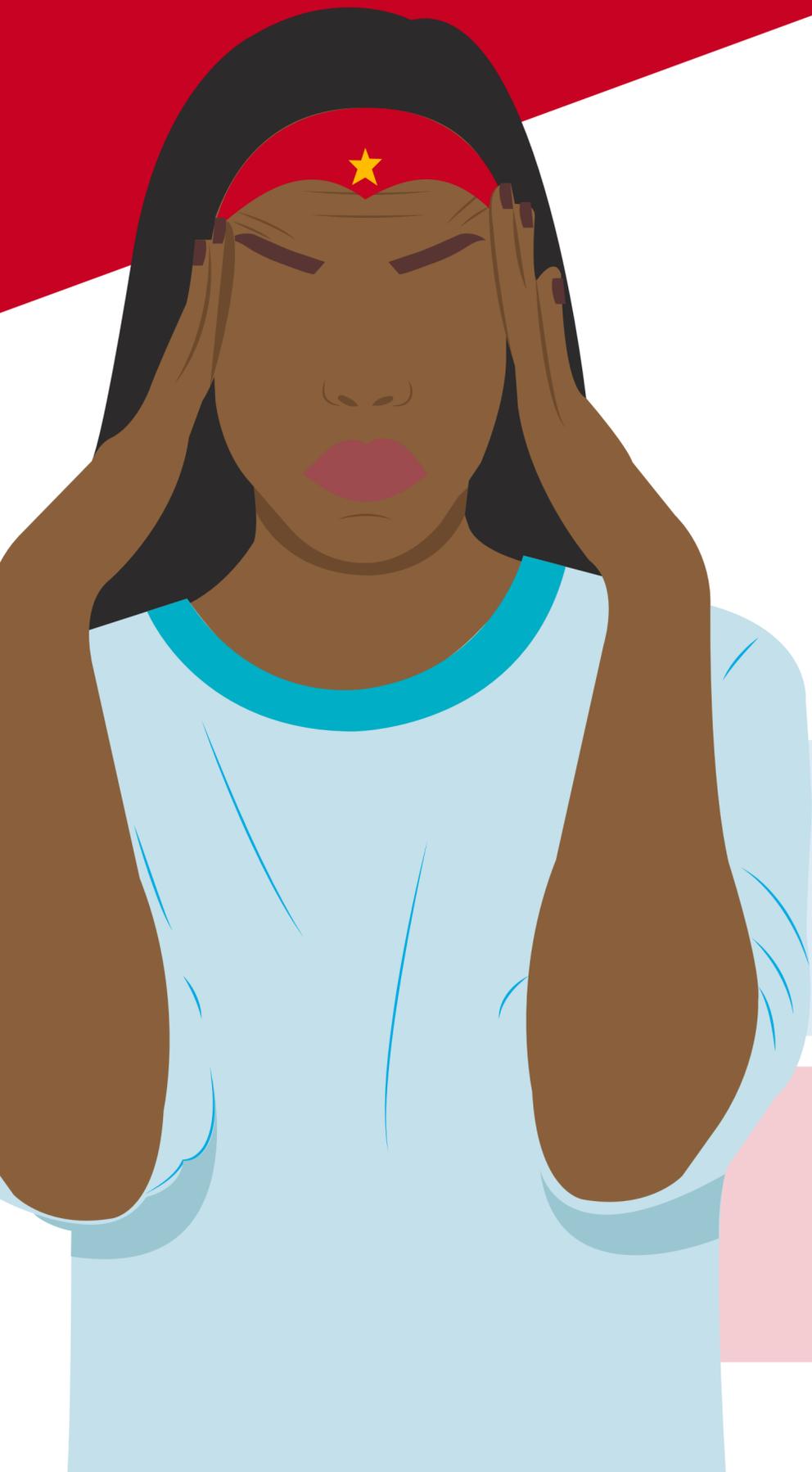
Show empathy and understanding: Express empathy and understanding towards the woman's situation. Assure her that she is not alone in seeking emergency contraception and that you are there to provide support.

Deliver precise details: Provide clear and accurate information about the emergency contraceptive pills, its usage, effectiveness, and any potential side effects. Address any questions or concerns she may have, ensuring she feels well-informed.

- **What you can say:** "It's completely normal to seek emergency contraception, and we're here to assist you since we have helped many others"

"I want to assure you that I'm here to answer all your questions and help you understand the process. There is no judgment here, and my goal is to provide you with the support and information you need"





SCENARIO 2

WHEN THE PATIENT IS CONCERNED:

Women who feel worried, insecure, or hesitant about asking for an emergency contraceptive pill.

Many of the patients may not have prior experience with emergency contraceptive pills, leading to a lack of knowledge about its usage, effectiveness, and potential side effects. This lack of familiarity can raise a number of questions and concerns.

The woman may be uncertain about how her body will react to the medication and whether it might have any adverse effects on her overall health. She might fear experiencing discomfort or complications. Insufficient knowledge about emergency contraceptive pills and its potential side effects can contribute to feelings of concern and insecurity. Without proper understanding, she may imagine worst-case scenarios or have misconceptions about its impact on her body.

WHAT TO DO:

- Give her ample time to express her concerns and questions. Be patient and attentive, allowing her to fully articulate her worries.
- Acknowledge and validate her feelings and concerns. Let her know that it is normal to have questions and worries in this situation. This validation can help alleviate anxiety and build trust.
- Explain how to use the emergency contraceptive pill, including timing and dosage. Discuss potential side effects, their likelihood, duration, and address any concerns, offering strategies for managing these side effects, if needed.

WHAT TO SAY:

- "Many women have similar worries and uncertainties when considering the emergency contraceptive pills. Feel free to share your concerns, and we can address them together"
- "If you're concerned about potential side effects, let me assure you that they are usually mild and temporary. I can provide you with strategies to manage any discomfort you may experience"
- "It's important to note that the primary purpose of an emergency contraceptive pill is to prevent pregnancy, not to cause infertility. Its effects are temporary, and it does not present a risk to your long-term fertility"

REMEMBER:

These key points should be communicated to address concerns and provide accurate information:

- It does not affect established pregnancies.
- It does not cause weight gain.
- It does not affect fertility or cause cancer.

SCENARIO 3

WHEN THE PATIENT IS THE PARTNER:

Men experiencing concern, a strong sense of responsibility, actively seeking ways to support their partners, and feeling anxious about the situation.

- Men may buy emergency contraception to support their partners in preventing unintended pregnancies and to take responsibility in shared decision-making. Whether it is to ensure convenience or maintain privacy, their actions contribute to promoting safe and effective emergency contraception. Some women may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about directly purchasing those. In such cases, the partner can play a key role by buying the pill to ensure privacy and reduce potential stigma or judgment for his girlfriend.
- As a health care provider, it is essential to maintain a non-judgmental and supportive approach, recognizing that taking an emergency contraceptive pill is a shared responsibility. That is why it is important to prioritize providing accurate information, ensuring confidentiality, and offering guidance to both men and women in need of emergency contraception.
- It is important to establish whether the woman has enough information to consent to taking the pill.



WHAT TO DO

- **Use supportive language:** Use language that acknowledges and reinforces his role in being supportive and responsible. Assure him that he is doing the right thing by taking proactive steps to address the situation.
- **Assess the situation:** Determine if the man is purchasing the emergency contraceptive pill as a backup or on behalf of his partner.
- **Suggest he consults his partner:** Encourage the man to ask his partner if she has any additional questions and emphasize that you are open to discussing with her directly in privacy and confidentiality if she chooses.

WHAT TO SAY

- "It's understandable to feel a bit anxious or concerned, but know that you're not alone. Many men come here seeking emergency contraceptive pills, and we're here to support you"
- "I understand that this may be an unexpected situation, but rest assured that you're doing the right thing by seeking for emergency contraceptive pills"

REMEMBER:

- Anyone can buy **Postpil** and other brands of levonorgestrel emergency contraceptive pills.
- **Postpil**[®] can be used by any woman of any age, who wishes to avoid pregnancy, including adolescents, women who are breastfeeding, or women with a history of ectopic pregnancy.



SCENARIO 4

WHEN THE PATIENT WANTS A BACKUP:

Women who adopt a proactive and responsible approach to avoid stressful situations and potential barriers.

- Women may choose to buy an emergency contraceptive pill "just in case" as a proactive measure to have emergency contraception readily available in case they have unprotected sex or experience a contraceptive failure. This can include situations such as going on vacation or being in remote locations where obtaining the emergency contraceptive pill may be challenging or time-sensitive. By purchasing it in advance, they ensure they have a backup option readily available, providing **peace of mind and reducing potential stress** or delays in obtaining emergency contraception when needed.
- Purchasing the emergency contraceptive pill in advance improves accessibility and convenience, as it helps women avoid potential barriers like limited pharmacy access during emergencies or time-sensitive circumstances. Additionally, in case of irregular menstrual cycles, women may have difficulty tracking ovulation accurately. Purchasing ECP "just in case" can provide an additional layer of protection against unintended pregnancy.

WHAT TO DO

- **Normalizing the practice:** Explain that many women choose to have the emergency contraceptive pill as a backup option. Assure her that being proactive and prepared is a responsible approach to sexual and reproductive health.
- **Highlighting its purpose:** Emphasize that having the emergency contraceptive pill as a backup does not mean she expects or plans to have contraceptive failures or unprotected sex. It's simply a precautionary measure to ensure she has emergency contraception readily available if the need arises.

WHAT TO SAY

- "I want to assure you that it's completely normal to have emergency contraceptive pill as a backup option. Many women choose to have it on hand for added peace of mind"
- "Living far away or traveling to new places can present challenges in accessing emergency contraception. By having emergency contraceptive pill with you, you can proactively address any contraceptive mishaps and continue your journey worry-free"

REMEMBER:

- It is safe to take **Postpil** more than once in the same menstrual cycle.
- It is strongly recommended to receive counseling from your doctor about an ongoing contraceptive method.

GENERAL ADVICE:

- Show empathy towards your patient, understanding the sensitivity of the situation.
- Adopt a non-judgmental tone of voice and posture, creating a supportive environment for discussion.
- Emphasize the importance of taking **Postpil** as soon as possible after sexual intercourse and within 72 hours for maximum effectiveness.
- Make sure they understand that taking it as soon as possible increases its effectiveness.
- Inform them that the regimen for **Postpil** involves taking only one pill containing 1.5 mg Levonorgestrel.
- Remind her that if she vomits within 2 hours of taking the pill, she should repeat the dosage.
- Highlight that **Postpil** is safe and pre-qualified by the World Health Organization.
- Ask if they have any questions or need further clarification on any aspect.

By following these guidelines, you will ensure that your patient receives the necessary information and support during this process.



PRODUCT INFORMATION

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

Levonorgestrel Tablets 1.5 mg

Postpil is manufactured in line with the highest international quality standards and complies with standards set by the World Health Organisation.

For questions, please visit our website: www.dktwomancare.org
Or consult a doctor or medical expert.

FORMULATION: 1 tablet contains : Levonorgestrel 1.5 mg.

EXCIPIENTS: Lactose monohydrate, Maize Starch, Potato Starch, Talc, Puried Water, Colloidal anhydrous Silica and Magnesium Stearate.

DRUG DESCRIPTION: Levonorgestrel (**Postpil**) tablets are emergency contraceptive pills.

INDICATIONS: **Postpil** is an emergency contraceptive for prevention of pregnancy following unprotected intercourse or if you were forced into having sex (rape), or after a known or suspected contraceptive failure such as: when a condom breaks, or you missed taking your regular contraceptive pills or injections, or you did not abstain from sex during your fertile period etc. **Postpil** can be used by women of all reproductive ages including adolescents.

MECHANISM OF ACTION: **Postpil** mainly acts by preventing the release of an egg (ovulation) or by stopping the egg and sperm from meeting (fertilization), through altering tubal transport of sperm and egg. It is not effective once the process of implantation has begun.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS: **Postpil** is contra-indicated for use in the case of known or suspected pregnancy or if you are hypersensitive to Levonorgestrel.

DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION: Take the one tablet of **Postpil** orally to prevent pregnancy as soon as possible, not later than 72 hours (3 days) after unprotected sex, rape, or suspected contraceptive failure. The earlier you take **Postpil**, the more effective it will be. If you vomit within two hours of taking the tablets, you should repeat the dose. It can be used at any time during your menstrual cycle.

What happens if you have unprotected intercourse more than once in 72 hours?

Emergency contraceptives like **Postpil** prevent pregnancy by delaying ovulation and are most effective within the first 24 hours (1 day) of unprotected sex. As a result, if you have taken **Postpil** and have unprotected sex again after 24 hours, you may be at risk of pregnancy because active sperm could be waiting in the fallopian tubes when the egg is eventually released, therefore another dose of **Postpil** can be taken to ensure prevention of pregnancy. Please note that even if multiple acts of unprotected sex occur in a day, **Postpil** should not be taken more than once within 24 hours (except when vomiting within 2 hours of taking the tablets). Subsequently, it is recommended you begin a regular short or long term method of contraception the day after taking Postpil and you should consult a healthcare professional for advice on choosing a method most suitable to you.

What happens if you take Postpil more than once in your cycle?

Repeated use of **Postpil** or emergency contraceptives poses no known health risks. It is medically safe. You may have menstrual changes such as shorter/longer cycles and have a heavier/lighter period than normal and other side effects mentioned in this leaflet should be anticipated. However, it is recommended that you use a regular, ongoing method of contraception as it is the 'most effective' way to prevent pregnancy. You should consult a healthcare professional for advice on choosing a regular method most suitable to your needs

How safe is Postpil?

Extensive medical research and many years of monitoring have shown that emergency contraceptives such as **Postpil** are safe. They do not affect fertility or increase the risk of cancer or ectopic pregnancy or cause long-term side effects. However, like all drugs they may have side effects, but these are usually minor temporary side effects such as irregular menstruation, nausea, etc. Emergency contraception is a safe and important option for preventing unwanted pregnancies, but is not a regular contraceptive method.

Side Effects: The following side effects may occur after taking emergency contraceptives such as **Postpil**: menstrual changes e.g. heavier or lighter bleeding; nausea, lower abdominal pain, fatigue, headache, dizziness, breast tenderness. Delay of menses (>7 days). These symptoms may be treated symptomatically and usually resolve within a few days.

Precautions: Effects on menses: some women may experience spotting a few days after taking **Postpil**® but this is not your period and menstrual bleeding may occur earlier or later than expected by a few days. If your menses is delayed beyond one week of expected date, consider the possibility of pregnancy.

Existing Pregnancy: **Postpil** is NOT effective in terminating an existing pregnancy. It is NOT an abortion tablet.

Ectopic Pregnancy: A history of ectopic pregnancy is not a contra-indication to use this emergency contraceptive method. If you develop severe lower abdominal pain or still become pregnant after taking the tablet, you may have an ectopic pregnancy, and should seek immediate medical check-up.

STI/HIV: **Postpil** does NOT protect against HIV infection or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Drug Interactions

Drugs or herbal products that induce enzymes such as CYP3A4, may decrease the effectiveness of progestin-only emergency contraceptives such as **Postpil**. Such drugs include: Barbiturates, Carbamazepine, Ciclosporin, Griseofulvin, Oxcarbazepine, Phenytoin, Drugs or herbal products that induce enzymes such as CYP3A4, may decrease the effectiveness of progestin-only emergency contraceptives such as **Postpil**. Such drugs include: Barbiturates, Carbamazepine, Ciclosporin, Griseofulvin, Oxcarbazepine, Phenytoin, Rifampin, Ritonavir, Rifampicin, St. John's wort, Topiramate.

Storage: Keep out of the reach of children. Store below 30°C.

Presentation/Package: Each carton contains a single blister with one tablet of **Postpil** (Levonorgestrel Tablets 1.5 mg) along with a package insert.

¹ World Health Organization. (2021). Emergency contraception Fact sheet. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/emergency-contraception>

² World Health Organization Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research (WHO/SRH) and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health/ Center for Communication Programs (CCP), Knowledge SUCCESS. Family Planning: A Global Handbook for Providers (2022 update). Baltimore and Geneva: CCP and WHO; 2022'

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