Emergency contraception or ‘morning-after-pills’ are single tablets taken after intercourse which will substantially reduce the chance of becoming pregnant.

There is a choice between two different ‘morning-after-pills’ which your Pharmacist can supply, both of which are single tablets. Levonelle 1500 (levonorgestrel) can be taken up to 72 hours (3 days) after intercourse, alternatively ellaOne (Ulipristal acetate) can be taken for up to 120 hours (5 days) after intercourse.

You will need to complete a short form. If your Pharmacist cannot supply you with a morning-after-pill you should attend a GP surgery or family planning clinic instead.

The supply of a morning-after-pill from your Pharmacist is a private service for which you will need to make a payment. Emergency contraception may be available to you through a doctor’s surgery or family planning clinic without a charge. Levonelle 1500 is usually lower in price than ellaOne.

Choosing between Levonelle 1500 and ellaOne

Levonelle and ellaOne should not both be used in the same menstrual cycle (period), either only one or the other. Levonelle 1500 and ellaOne work in similar ways, in most cases by delaying ovulation (release of an egg from the ovary). The side effects of both tablets are very similar.

EllaOne is very slightly more effective in preventing pregnancy than Levonelle 1500. Studies show there are approximately 2 in 100 pregnancies after Levonelle 1500 is taken compared with approximately 1.5 in 100 after ellaOne is taken, if they are taken in first 3 days after intercourse.

Levonelle 1500: Levonelle 1500 is effective if taken up to 3 days (72 hours) after intercourse.
EllaOne: EllaOne continues to be effective up to 5 days (120 hours) after intercourse.

Further Information

You MUST read the manufacturer’s information leaflet supplied with your tablets.

Levonelle 1500 or ellaOne tablets should be taken as soon as possible after intercourse and work best if taken earlier rather than later.

Levonelle 1500 and ellaOne should not be taken if you think you may already be pregnant. Neither tablet is known to harm existing pregnancies; however women who are already pregnant and take a morning-after-pill should inform their doctors.

Both Levonelle 1500 and ellaOne can delay your next period bleed. If your period is delayed by more than 5 days, a pregnancy test is required as the treatment may have failed to work and you may be pregnant.

If there is unusual abdominal pain or irregular period bleeding 2 to 6 weeks after taking either Levonelle 1500 or ellaOne a pregnancy test should be undertaken and a doctor consulted. These may be symptoms of an ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy outside the womb).

A morning-after-pill will NOT prevent pregnancy if it is taken before unprotected intercourse. The morning-after-pill only works in preventing pregnancy when it is taken after intercourse, not before.

Women taking regular contraceptive pills should continue to take pills as normal after taking Levonelle 1500 or ellaOne. However; contraceptive pills may be less effective than normal after taking a morning-after-pills and additional contraception with a barrier method (condom or cap) should also be used during the rest of the menstrual cycle (period).

Further information continued ...

If vomiting occurs within 3 hours of taking Levonelle 1500 or ellaOne, a repeat tablet should be obtained and taken straight away. Your Pharmacist can supply a repeat tablet if it is needed.

Your next period after taking Levonelle or ellaOne may be a few days longer or shorter than normal and there may also be spotting and light or heavy period bleeding afterwards.

Morning-after-pills should NOT normally be taken more than once in a menstrual cycle (period). If you require a second morning-after-pill in the same period, you should consult a doctor, specialist nurse or family planning clinic.

Morning-after-pills do NOT reduce the risks of contracting sexually transmitted diseases.

Levonelle 1500 contains the identical active ingredient to Levonelle One-step. Levonelle One-step is a different brand name for the same morning-after-pill. Your Pharmacists may choose to supply you with Levonelle One-step rather than Levonelle 1500.

Alternatives to morning-after-pills

Doctors and nurses sometimes offer to insert an IUCD (intrauterine contraceptive device) up to 120 hours (5 days) after unprotected intercourse. An IUCD can be left in place to provide ongoing contraception.

Further information

Further information on emergency contraception and routine contraception can be found on the Family Planning Association website www.fpa.org.uk and on the NHS Choices website www.nhs.uk/conditions/emergency-contraception/

Information about ellaOne can be found at the manufacturer’s web site www.ellaone.com/home