

Pharmacy Contraception Service

Emergency Contraception (EC)

Key information for pharmacy teams

Quick, confidential access to emergency contraception in your community

PURPOSE



Prevent
unplanned
pregnancy



Support
patient choice



Increase access
to time-critical care

1 What is the service?



- A consultation and supply service for emergency hormonal contraception (EC).
- Helps prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex or contraceptive failure (e.g. missed pills, torn condom).
- Provides advice on ongoing contraception and sexual health.
- Available to all, in line with NHS guidance.

2 Which emergency contraception can be supplied?



- Levonorgestrel 1.5 mg – see the PGD for details.
- Ulipristal acetate 30 mg – see the PGD for details.
- Choice is based on timing since unprotected sex, individual circumstances and clinical suitability.
- Follow the PGD and service specification.

3 Who can access the service?



- Open to all, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity, in line with NHS guidance.
- Assess capacity to consent. For those under 16, follow local safeguarding procedures (Fraser guidelines).
- Clinically appropriate and no need to see a GP first.
- Sensitive, confidential and non-judgemental support.

4 Consultation and supply



- Use the service pathway and PGD.
- Take a relevant history (including date and time of unprotected sex, regular contraception, medical history and any contraindications).
- Advise on the most suitable option and explain how and when to take it.
- Discuss possible side effects and what to do if vomited within 3 hours.
- Provide advice on ongoing contraception and offer STI testing/signposting.
- Record the consultation and supply on your PMR.

5 Timing and effectiveness



- **Levonorgestrel:** most effective within 72 hours (up to 3 days).
- **Ulipristal acetate:** more effective between 72–120 hours (3–5 days).
- The sooner EC is taken, the more effective it is.
- EC will not work if pregnancy has already occurred.
- Consider a pregnancy test if the next period is late.

6 IUD (copper coil) – most effective option



- The copper IUD (Cu-IUD) is the most effective form of emergency contraception and can be fitted up to 5 days after unprotected sex.
- Discuss this option with all individuals seeking EC.
- Know your local referral pathways for rapid access to Cu-IUD fitting.
- Provide clear information and support to help patients make an informed choice.

7 Safeguarding and vulnerable individuals



- Be alert to safeguarding concerns (e.g. under 16s, coercion, abuse or exploitation).
- Follow local safeguarding procedures.
- Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians delivering the service must have completed Level 3 safeguarding training OR have direct access to Level 3 advice.
- Document any concerns and actions taken.

8 More information and resources



- Full service specification, PGD and resources are available on the CPE website: cpe.org.uk/national-pharmacy-services/advanced-services/pharmacy-contraception-service/
- For local referral pathways and support, contact the CPGM team.

KEY BENEFITS



**Prevents
unplanned
pregnancy**
Quick, confidential
and convenient access.



**Supports
individual choice**
Empowers people to take
control of their reproductive health.



**Reduces pressure
on GP services**
Timely access to care
in the community.



This is a summary of the key information. Pharmacy owners and Responsible Pharmacists should read the full service specification and FGD.