Use of Emergency Contraception In the United States

- Emergency contraception is a way to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex or contraceptive failure; it has no effect on an established pregnancy.

- The majority of dedicated emergency contraceptive products currently on the market are effective when taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex (although they are decreasingly effective for up to five days after unprotected sex). These pills consist of a concentrated dosage of one of the same hormones found in birth control pills. Another product, containing ulipristal acetate, is also effective for up to five days.

- Nonhormonal copper IUDs inserted up to five days after unprotected intercourse can also act as emergency contraception.

- One in nine sexually experienced women of reproductive age have used emergency contraception, as of 2010. The majority of these women used emergency contraception only once (59%).

- Use is highest among 20–24-year-olds and never-married women, of whom 23% and 19%, respectively, report having ever used emergency contraception.

- Women report two main reasons for using emergency contraception: Forty-five percent fear that their regular method will fail, and 49% report having had unprotected sex.