



BC Centre for Disease Control  
Provincial Health Services Authority

Clinical Prevention Services  
Provincial STI/HIV Clinic

655 West 12th Avenue  
Vancouver, BC V5Z 4R4

Tel 604.707.5600  
Fax 604.707.5604

www.bccdc.ca  
www.SmartSexResource.com

## Levonorgestrel Emergency Contraception (Plan B<sup>®</sup> or generic equivalent)

Levonorgestrel (Plan B<sup>®</sup> or generic equivalent), is a progestin-only emergency contraceptive pill used to **prevent pregnancy** after sex. **The tablet (pill) should be taken as soon as possible**, preferably within 24 hours of last sexual contact. It can work up to 5 days (120 hours) after sex, **but is less effective with time**.

Emergency contraception may be considered after known or suspected unprotected or under-protected sex which may include: condom break/slip, no birth control used, missed or delayed birth control (e.g. pill, patch, vaginal ring, Depo-Provera<sup>®</sup> injection), dislodgement or incorrect use of a diaphragm or cervical cap, mistimed fertility method (that is, if intercourse occurred on a fertile cycle day), ejaculation on external genitalia, sexual assault.

Levonorgestrel (Plan B<sup>®</sup> or generic equivalent) is available at your local pharmacy, without a prescription, as well as at some community health clinics.

### How it Works

- Emergency contraception with levonorgestrel temporarily stops the release of an egg from the ovary, prevents fertilization of the egg, and/or prevents a fertilized egg from implanting in the uterus.

### Allergies

- Tell your healthcare provider if you have an allergy to levonorgestrel or any component ingredients in the tablet.

### CAUTION

- **Drug Interactions:** Tell your healthcare provider if you are taking any prescription, non-prescription, herbal, or recreational products. Individual drug interactions are not listed in this document
- **Levonorgestrel may not work as well in persons who weigh more than 75kg (165lbs), or have a Body Mass Index (BMI) greater than 25 kg/m<sup>2</sup>.** If this applies to you, ask your healthcare provider about other available methods of emergency contraception. Keep in mind, that levonorgestrel may still have some effectiveness regardless of your weight, so it can be taken if other methods are not available.

## Levonorgestrel Emergency Contraception (cont'd)

### Pregnancy and Chest/Breastfeeding

- Emergency contraception is not prescribed if you are pregnant or suspect you may be pregnant. If, however, an individual inadvertently takes levonorgestrel not knowing they are pregnant, it will not harm the person or the course of the pregnancy.
- Levonorgestrel is safe for individuals who are chest/breastfeeding

### Side Effects

- You may experience nausea, abdominal pain, headache (usually subside in 1-2 days)
- Irregular menstrual bleeding: period may be early/late/heavier or lighter than usual
- Less common: breast tenderness, vomiting, diarrhea

### Instructions for Taking

- Take levonorgestrel 1.5 mg tablet orally as a single dose, as soon as possible, up to 5 days (120 hours) after last sexual contact or possible exposure
- If vomiting occurs within 2 hours, the dose may be ineffective and should be repeated

### Storage Instructions

- Store at room temperature between 15 °C and 30 °C.
- Protect from light and moisture.
- Do not use medications beyond the printed expiry date.
- Keep away from the reach of children.

### Special Instructions

- Use a back-up method (e.g. condoms) for 7 days after taking levonorgestrel. Since levonorgestrel works by delaying ovulation, there is a greater chance of getting pregnant if you have unprotected sex again AFTER taking it, and before your next period.
- If you do not get your menstrual period within 3 weeks of using emergency contraception, please follow up with your healthcare provider; a pregnancy test is recommended.
- Emergency contraception should not be used as a regular contraceptive method. Discuss ongoing birth control options with your healthcare provider
- Emergency contraception does not protect against sexually transmitted infections; discuss STI testing with your provider

If you have any questions or need more information,  
please visit [www.smartsexresource.com](http://www.smartsexresource.com) or contact your healthcare provider.