

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION AND WEIGHT

Some forms of emergency contraception (EC) *may* not be as effective for heavier women. In particular, research studies have suggested that levonorgestrel (brand names Plan B One-Step® and Take Action™) might not be effective for individuals weighing more than 154 pounds, whereas ulipristal acetate (ella®) may only be effective up to 194 pounds. However, according to the American Society for Emergency Contraception (ASEC), these conclusions are based on very limited research and on studies that were not specifically designed to investigate the relationship between weight and effectiveness of EC.

ASEC examined the available evidence and concluded:

- No woman should be refused or discouraged from using EC based on her weight.
- Regardless of body weight, the most effective form of EC is the copper IUD, followed by ulipristal acetate.

ASEC recognizes that most women who use EC obtain it at a pharmacy and not through a health care clinician. Advocates may wish to encourage heavier women to consult a health care provider about EC, so that they can learn about all their options.

EC is an important resource for sexual assault survivors, including those who are in ongoing relationships involving intimate partner sexual violence and/or reproductive coercion. EC can serve as a backup to "[stealth birth control](#)" (birth control that is less detectable by an abusive partner).

The science of EC is evolving, and it is important to keep up with current information in order to support survivors effectively. The Forensic Healthcare Online blog (www.forensichealth.com) is an excellent way to stay informed about EC and other sexual health topics.

Reference

American Society for Emergency Contraception. (January 2015). *Efficacy of Emergency Contraception and Body Weight: Current Understanding and Recommendations*. Retrieved from http://americansocietyforec.org/uploads/3/2/7/0/3270267/asec_ec_efficacy_and_weight_statement.pdf