

Ulipristal acetate

Much confusion surrounds birth control. It's difficult to keep up with what's new, or to figure out what will suit someone's lifestyle. Especially when it comes to emergency contraception, no one can waste time figuring out where to get it, or how to use it. Thankfully, ulipristal acetate - more commonly known as *ella* - is user friendly.

Ulipristal acetate is an emergency contraceptive agent that prevents unwanted pregnancy by stopping a woman's egg from being released for 5 days. The process of a woman's egg being released is known as ovulation. It may be used after birth control failure, or if birth control wasn't used. Any sperm that are lying in wait would be fruitless, as there wouldn't be an egg for them to fertilize.

ella was created by the pharmaceutical company HRA Pharma, and has been sold in Europe since October 2009 as ellaOne. The FDA (Food & Drug Association) approved its use in the US in August 2010, though the agent levonorgestrel - found in Plan B and Next Choice - has been available since the late 90s.

So how is *ella* different from Plan B? Plan B also stops ovulation, but by tricking the body into thinking it's already pregnant. However, Plan B is most effective when taken within the first 24 hours; it's significantly less effective after 3 days.

In other terms, Plan B is like giving my landlord an IOU within 3 days so he only thinks I'm going to pay the rent - though I never will - and he's more likely to believe me the earlier I do it. Using *ella* is like barricading my door, and my landlord would sit on my steps until he gives up 5 days later.

Also, *ella* is not an abortion pill. It cannot terminate an existing pregnancy, which is what the abortion pill is for. Though ella functions like the abortion pill, the latter has a much higher dose. Another pill is taken after the initial pill to expel the contents of the uterus. As *ella* will not end a pregnancy, taking it accidentally will not harm a pregnancy either.

A prescription is needed to obtain *ella*. There are two options: visiting a health provider and picking *ella* up at the pharmacy, or fulfilling a prescription through an online pharmacy and having it shipped. However, online pharmacies cannot ship to certain states, so it is crucial for those filling out a prescription online to double check. Pricing varies, but as ella is prescription based, insurance and Medicaid are likely to cover it.

ella is just one pill, and can be taken any time. It is best to take *ella* within 5 days after the event, though the earlier the better. It is important to use a condom for the rest of the menstrual cycle. *ella* should not be used as a form of birth control. There are better suited methods available, which a health provider can discuss with *ella*-seekers, as well as answer any other questions about *ella*.