

# EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION IS NOT ABORTION

The anti-choice movement often equates **emergency contraception and medication abortion**. This has created widespread misinformation and perpetuated stigma around these two very different medications.

## KNOW THE FACTS

Emergency contraception may be used to prevent pregnancy after unprotected or inadequately protected sexual intercourse. Emergency contraception is effective in preventing pregnancy within 120 hours after unprotected intercourse, but it is most effective if used as soon as possible, especially within 24 hours. (1)

Levonorgestrel-only emergency contraception (such as *Plan B* or *Prevenza*) inhibits or delays ovulation, thereby preventing sperm from reaching egg. Emergency contraception is unlikely to prevent a fertilized egg from implanting on the uterine wall, and is ineffective once implantation occurs. (2)

Emergency contraception is only effective before pregnancy is established and is therefore NOT an abortifacient.

Medication abortion can be taken up to 10 weeks gestation to end an existing pregnancy. (3) In the United States, medication abortion involves the use of two different medications: mifepristone and misoprostol. The first medicine, mifepristone, is taken at the clinic in order to block progesterone, a hormone essential to the development of a pregnancy. Misoprostol, taken 24-48 hours later, works to empty the uterus by causing cramping and bleeding, similar to an early miscarriage.

### RESOURCES

1) ACOG Committee on Health Care for Underserved Women. 2017. "Access to Emergency Contraception." *Obstetrics & Gynecology*. ACOG Committee Opinion, 130 (1): 48-52.

2) ACOG Committee on Practice Bulletins - Gynecology. 2015. "Emergency Contraception." 152. *Practice Bulletin*.

3) Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation. 2018. "Medication Abortion Fact Sheet." <http://files.kff.org/attachment/Fact-Sheet-Medication-Abortion>.