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The Emergency Contraceptive pill should be recommended to women weighing more than 75 kg who have had unprotected sex within the last 5 days.

Emergency contraception reduces the risk of unintended pregnancy after unprotected sexual intercourse. It can also be used when contraception may have failed, e.g. broken condom, missed pill.

There are only 2 types of emergency contraception available in Australia: the emergency contraceptive pill and the copper intrauterine contraceptive device (IUD).

The emergency contraceptive pill is most common and consists of a 1.5mg dose of levonorgestrel a synthetic version of the naturally produced progesterone, sold as: Postinor, NorLevo or Levonelle, it can be bought from a chemist without a doctor's prescription.

A copper IUD can also be used as emergency contraception if inserted up to 5 days after unprotected sex and is the most effective form of emergency contraception. The IUD can then provide immediate on-going contraception. However, insertion of a copper IUD is a specialised medical procedure and access to a copper IUD within 5 days can therefore be difficult. A copper IUD costs around \$120 and is not covered by a health care card and there may be additional costs related to insertion.

Family Planning Victoria (FPV) is aware of international reports that the emergency contraceptive pill may be less effective for women who weigh over 75 kg and may not work in women weighing more than 80kg,

FPV has consulted the International Consortium for Emergency Contraception (ICEC) and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), the agency that regulates medicines in Australia. The TGA is currently reviewing the available information to determine whether any action is required in Australia.

At time of writing, FPV has assessed that emergency contraceptive pills should be recommended for women who weigh over 75 kg who have had unprotected sex or a contraception mishap within the past 5 days. The emergency contraceptive pill is extremely safe, and may still offer some benefit in preventing an unintended pregnancy in these women.

As an overall strategy for reducing the need for emergency contraception, FPV supports increased access to long acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs), such as implants and IUDs. LARCs have been proven to significantly reduce rates of unintended pregnancy and abortion.

FPV will work in consultation with our interstate colleagues the TGA and the ICEC to determine any necessary changes to emergency contraceptive pill practice in Australia. Until we have more conclusive evidence, the emergency contraceptive pill and the copper IUD are two suitable options for any Australian woman seeking emergency contraception.

(Ulipristal acetate, a more effective emergency contraceptive pill option, is not currently available in Australia.)