



**The Cochrane Library
... the best single source of reliable evidence
about the effects of health care**

Strictly Embargoed until 00:01 hours (GMT), 18th April 2007

**Advanced provision of emergency contraception does not
reduce pregnancy rates**

Women who have unprotected sexual intercourse or experience contraceptive failure can seek emergency contraception to reduce their chance of unintended pregnancy. Emergency contraception is a safe medication, and to be effective, must be taken within five days of unprotected intercourse. Several barriers can discourage use of emergency contraception, including an inability to obtain the medication fast enough. One proposed solution is to let women have a set of the tablets that they can keep for immediate use should it be needed.

“Providing emergency contraception before it is needed in case unprotected intercourse occurs gives women rapid access to the medication,” says lead author Chelsea Polis, a PhD student at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, in Baltimore, USA.

Polis headed up a team of Cochrane Researchers who set out to see whether this sort of advance provision of emergency contraception influenced pregnancy rates, occurrence of sexually transmitted diseases, sexual behaviour and the use of other contraceptives.

They identified eight randomised controlled trials that met their inclusion criteria, which involved a total of 6,389 people living in the USA, China and India.

Despite increased use (single and multiple) and faster use of emergency contraception, advance provision did not reduce pregnancy rates on a population level.

At the same time advance provision was not accompanied by increased rates of sexually transmitted infections or increased frequency of unprotected intercourse. In addition it did not lead to women changing their use of other contraceptives.

“Women should have education about, and easy access to, emergency contraception because it can decrease the chance of pregnancy. However, the interventions for advance provision tested so far have not reduced overall pregnancy rates,” says Polis.

- Ends -

Notes for editors

1. Polis CB, Schaffer K, Blanchard K, Glasier A, Harper CC, Grimes DA. Advance provision of emergency contraception for pregnancy prevention (full review). *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2007, Issue 2. Art. No.: CD005497. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD005497.pub2
2. The Cochrane Library contains high quality health care information, including Systematic Reviews from The Cochrane Collaboration. These Reviews bring together research on the effects of health care and are considered the gold standard for determining the relative effectiveness of different interventions. The Cochrane Collaboration (<http://www.cochrane.org>) is a UK registered international charity and the world's leading producer of systematic Reviews. It has been demonstrated that Cochrane Systematic Reviews are of comparable or better quality and are updated more often than the Reviews published in print journals^a.
3. The Cochrane Library can be accessed at <http://www.thecochranelibrary.com>. Guest users may access abstracts for all Reviews in the database, and members of the media may request full access to the contents of the Library. For further information, see contact details below.
4. A number of countries have national provisions by which some or all of their residents are able to access The Cochrane Library for free. These include:

Australia	http://www.nicsl.com.au/Cochrane
Denmark	http://www.deff.dk or http://www.cochrane.dk
England	http://www.nelh.nhs.uk/cochrane.asp
Finland	http://www.terveysportti.fi
India	http://www.icmr.nic.in/
Ireland	http://www.thecochranelibrary.com
Latin and Central America and Caribbean	http://cochrane.bireme.br
New Zealand	http://www.moh.govt.nz/cochranelibrary or http://www.nzgg.org.nz/ or http://www.cochrane.org.nz/
Norway	http://www.cochrane.no
Poland	http://www.aotm.gov.pl
Scotland	http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk
Spain	http://www.update-software.com/Clibplus/ClibPlus.asp
South Africa	http://www.sahealthinfo.org/evidence/databases.htm
Sweden	http://www.sbu.se
Wales	http://www.thecochranelibrary.com
The Canadian Province of New Brunswick	http://www.gnb.ca/0003
The Canadian Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Yukon	http://www.thecochranelibrary.com
The Canadian Province of Saskatchewan	http://www.thecochranelibrary.com
The US State of Wyoming	http://wyld.state.wy.us/dbloginform.html

5. There are also several programmes, such as the Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative (HINARI) that provide access in developing countries. To find out whether your country is included in any of these programmes/provisions, or to learn how to get access if you don't already have it, please visit: <http://www.thecochranelibrary.com>.

If you would like to see a full list of Reviews published in the new issue of The Cochrane Library, or would like to request full access to the contents of The Library, please contact:

Contact: Jennifer Beal
Tel: +44 (0)1243 770633
Email: jbeal@wiley.co.uk

^a Jadad AR, Cook DJ, Jones A, Klassen TP, Tugwell P, Moher M, et al. Methodology and reports of systematic Reviews and meta-analyses: a comparison of Cochrane Reviews with articles published in paper-based journal.