

# Provision of the progestogen-only pill by community pharmacies as bridging contraception for women receiving emergency contraception: the Bridge-it RCT

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## Plain English summary

### The Bridge-it RCT

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## Plain English summary

The emergency contraceptive pill can prevent pregnancy following unprotected sex or a burst condom; however, unless women start a regular method of contraception they remain at risk of pregnancy. Most women obtain emergency contraception from a community pharmacy (chemist), but then require an appointment with a general practitioner or at a sexual and reproductive health clinic for ongoing contraception. Getting an appointment can take time and unintended pregnancies can occur during this time.

If a pharmacist could give women a small supply of a progestogen-only pill or 'mini-pill' with their emergency contraception, together with help to get an appointment at a clinic, then this might help more women to start effective contraception.

We undertook a study in 29 pharmacies in Lothian, Tayside and London among women receiving emergency contraception. Pharmacists provided either their standard advice about contraception (control group) or the intervention. The intervention was a 3-month supply of the progestogen-only pill plus a rapid-access card, which, if presented at a sexual and reproductive health clinic, would help women get an appointment for contraception. The order in which the pharmacy provided either control or intervention was randomised. We conducted telephone interviews with the women 4 months later to find out what contraception they were using.

A total of 636 women took part in the study, 316 in the intervention group and 320 in the control group. The proportion who said that they were using an effective method of contraception was around 20% larger in the intervention group. In addition, fewer women in this group said that they had used emergency contraception again. This study shows that community pharmacy provision of a small supply of progestogen-only pills and the invitation to attend a sexual and reproductive health clinic results in a large increase in the use of effective contraception after emergency contraception. If this became routine practice then it could help prevent unintended pregnancies.



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