



SUPPLEMENT 33 THE MORNING- AFTER PILL

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE MORNING-AFTER PILL

A HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR from Ontario, Canada, wrote to Generations for Life with the following question:

My friends and I were talking about abortion and we eventually turned to the topic of the morning-after pill. All of the other girls believed it should be used because they said, “It takes three days for the sperm and egg to connect.” My sister told me that was nonsense and I believe her, but I don’t have the proof! What do I say to something like that? If you could help me up I would appreciate it! I’ve been feeling overwhelmed!

The questions this student asked are very common ones, as there are misconceptions—even among pro-lifers—about the morning-after pill (MAP), which is sometimes called “Plan B” or “Emergency Contraception.”

WHAT IS THE MORNING-AFTER PILL, AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

THE MORNING-AFTER PILL is like the regular birth control pill, only much stronger. Like the regular birth control pill, the morning-after pill works by preventing ovulation—and, therefore, preventing conception (also called fertilization, the point at which sperm and egg unite)—but, even if ovulation does occur, the MAP, like the birth control pill, can prevent implantation.

We know this is how the birth control pill works because the manufacturers tell us this is how it works. For example, the insert that is included in a case of Ortho Tri-Cyclen Lo Tablets—one of many common brands of birth control pills—says the following:

Combination oral contraceptives act by suppression of gonadotropins. Although the primary mechanism of this action is inhibition of ovulation, other alterations include changes in the cervical mucus (which increase the difficulty of sperm entry into the uterus) and the endometrium (which reduce the likelihood of implantation).

WHEN DOES CONCEPTION TAKE PLACE?

IT DEPENDS. CONCEPTION CAN occur just minutes after intercourse. Sometimes, though, it happens later, because sperm can live in a woman’s body for up to five days. (By contrast, an egg has a lifespan of approximately 24 hours from the time it is discharged from the ovary.) Thus, it’s possible for conception to take place a few days after intercourse.

So, if someone says, “It takes three days for the sperm and egg to connect,” that’s very misleading. It may take that long—or perhaps longer—but sometimes it takes just minutes.

For more on this, please see the chapter “The Human Embryo” from *Abortion: Questions and Answers* by Dr. John Willke:

<http://www.lifeissues.org/AbortionQandA/chapters/c11.pdf>

DOES THE MORNING-AFTER PILL CAUSE ABORTIONS?

PROBABLY. IT’S NOT REALLY possible to say how often it causes abortions for the reasons stated previously—because the length of time after intercourse that conception occurs can vary.

As it relates to abortion, the best way to explain why using the MAP is immoral is to say that it has the potential to act as an abortifacient (meaning, a drug that can cause an abortion).

Consider this analogy: Imagine that someone fires a gun into a dark room. He doesn’t know if anyone is in the room, but he does know it’s possible there might be someone there.

Now imagine that there actually is someone in the room, and that person is killed by the gunshot.

Is the shooter responsible for the man’s death? Of course he is, because he knew it was possible there might be someone in there when he fired the gun.

The same is true with using the morning-after pill: Assuming they know how the morning-after pill works, the woman who takes it—and the man who encourages her to take it—don’t know for sure if they’ve already conceived a child, but they know it’s possible that they have, and by taking the MAP, they’re willing to abort that child. ¹

¹ In a way, the question of whether the morning-after pill causes abortions misses the point. That’s because not only is abortion morally wrong, but so is contraception, and in fact, contraception has made the problem of abortion much worse. For more on this, see Supplement 10B: The Connection Between Contraception and Abortion. And, for more information on the many harmful side effects of various contraceptives, see Supplement 10A: Methods of Contraception.