



Prescribe Choice

Take Action: Improve Access to Emergency Contraception on Your Campus

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In May 2004, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) sent a letter to Barr Laboratories, the distributors of the emergency contraceptive Plan B, rejecting its application to make the prescription drug available over-the-counter (OTC). This decision was made **despite the fact that the FDA's own expert advisory panel deemed the drug to be safe and effective and voted 23-4 in favor of making Plan B available over-the-counter.**

This summer a new application for the OTC status of Plan B was submitted with a novel packaging requirement- the "dual label". If approved under this requirement, Plan B would be available OTC only for women 16 and older. Younger women would still need a prescription to purchase emergency contraception. This is a policy many public health and women's rights advocates find completely unacceptable because it prevents responsible yet vulnerable young women from accessing a product that has the potential to powerfully shape their future.

The FDA is scheduled to make its decision regarding this application by late January 2005. Many advocates and health care experts familiar with this issue and the FDA process feel that politics is trumping science, and that this decision will be made purely on political grounds- in accordance with an anti-reproductive rights, right-wing agenda. Right-wing groups and anti-reproductive rights members of Congress have been pressuring the FDA to reject approval of over-the-counter status, but scientific research has overwhelmingly demonstrated the safety, efficacy, and need for emergency contraception over-the-counter **for all women.**

We cannot allow anti-reproductive rights extremists to get away with taking this women's health and public health breakthrough product away from women seeking to avoid unintended pregnancy. It is imperative that we send thousands of messages to the FDA in support of OTC status for Plan B. **The FDA will make a decision by January 2005.**

Urge the FDA to Make Emergency Contraception Available Over-the-Counter

Encourage students to raise their voices and tell the Food and Drug Administration to stop playing politics with women's lives and make emergency contraception available to women over-the-counter. The Feminist Majority Foundation has spearheaded the petition drive to pressure the FDA to change its policies and have science, rather than right-wing ideology, inform the FDA's decision making. Join the more than 70,000 people who have endorsed this public health measure. For more information and to Take Action, go to www.prescribechoice.org

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Educate Your Campus About Emergency Contraception (EC)!

While EC is most effective if taken within the first 24 hours after unprotected intercourse, it can be taken within 120 hours, or 5 days. A recent study, however, found that only one out of five women in the U.S. knows enough about emergency contraception to take it in a timely manner (Kaiser Family Foundation). Take action to make sure that women on your campus and in your community know what EC is and where they can access it:

- Stage speak-outs, conduct teach-ins, organize panel discussions with speakers from local women's rights organizations and reproductive health providers, and write letters to the editors of local newspapers.
- Work with your college health center, residential life, student government, and/or Dean of Students to raise awareness about EC and distribute contact information for local reproductive healthcare providers.
- Work with your local hospitals to make sure their emergency rooms offer emergency contraception to all victims of sexual assault.
- Post flyers in your women's bathroom stalls, the student union, and fitness centers. Chalk your campus and set up a table on the quad using *Prescribe Choice* materials. For more information and help with our education campaign, visit:
www.FeministCampus.org/PrescribeChoice/ecotc.asp.

Ensure That Your Campus Health Center Provides EC

Approximately 54% of college health centers do not provide emergency contraception or prescriptions for EC. Without on-campus access to EC, thousands of young women are unable to use this vital reproductive health service to prevent an unintended pregnancy.

- Call or visit your campus health center and ask if they provide EC. Ask if students must request EC, or if medical staff offer EC when a student is facing the possibility of an unintended pregnancy.
- If your campus does not offer simple, on-campus access to EC through the health center, work with the health center staff and college administration to bring EC to your campus.
- If your campus health center is not open on nights or weekends, work with the health center staff to provide an alternative means of access to EC for students at those times. *See FMF's 'Take Action: Bring EC to Your Campus' action sheet for ideas on how to do this.*

Insist on Advance EC Prescriptions at Your Campus Health Center

One can obtain an emergency contraception prescription during routine check-ups so that it will be on hand in case of an emergency. Advance prescriptions offer women immediate access to EC pills after unprotected intercourse, when it's most effective. Advance prescriptions also give women access to EC on weekends and in the evenings, when doctors' offices are most likely to be closed. Call or visit your campus health center and ask if the doctors or staff can write advance prescriptions for EC. If they presently do not, work with health center staff to make advance prescriptions an option for young women on your campus.

Make EC Information Part of a Resident Advisor Training on Campus

Resident Advisors usually receive training on a range of issues affecting college students, including crisis intervention and referrals. Resident Advisers should know what EC is and where students can access EC.

- Work with your campus Residential Life office to integrate EC information into Resident Advisor training.
- Develop a workshop on EC and offer to conduct the workshop as part of Resident Assistant training. Create a fact sheet that includes information about where women can access EC and make this information available to Resident Advisers.

Resources

Feminist Majority Foundation's Campus Program

www.FeministCampus.org/PrescribeChoice.org/ecotc.asp

Check out FMF's Campus Program website for more information, action ideas, and updates on the *Prescribe Choice* Campaign and *Emergency Contraception Over-the-Counter* Campaign.

The Association of Reproductive Health Professionals & Princeton University's Office of Population Research

www.Not-2-late.com

This website provides a range of information about emergency contraception, including a directory of emergency contraception providers and a list of birth control pills that can be used as emergency contraception. The site is a joint project of Princeton University's Office of Population Research and the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals.

Planned Parenthood

www.PlannedParenthood.org/ec

Planned Parenthood's resources about emergency contraception include a fact sheet about emergency room obstruction to EC availability and links to the two major brands of EC.

Center for Reproductive Rights

www.crlp.org

This site provides information about the availability of emergency contraception in the US and worldwide.