

Putting Prevention First: Emergency Contraception Access and Education



Increasing Use and Access to Emergency Contraception

- What is Emergency Contraception (EC)? EC, also known as the morning after pill is a concentrated dose of ordinary birth control pills that reduces a woman's chance of becoming pregnant by up to 89%. It is not the same as the abortion pill and must be taken within 5 days of unprotected sex to be effective.
- Approximately 3 million unintended pregnancies occur annually in the United States. Increased use of EC could reduce unintended pregnancies by half, thereby greatly reducing the need for abortion. Lack of access to EC may contribute to the higher rates of unplanned pregnancy in the U.S. compared with countries where EC is widely available.
- Six states (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Maine, New Mexico and Washington) have adopted measures to allow women to get EC without going to a doctor and getting a prescription. In these cases specially trained pharmacists work with other medical professionals to directly distribute EC to women in need. Because EC is most effective when taken within 24 hours of unprotected sex or sexual assault this allows women to get access to the drug much quicker.
- The FDA recently ruled that EC would be available directly from pharmacies without a prescription for women 18 or older, improving access for some women, but leaving teens without quick access to this essential medication.

Did you know?

A 2002 study revealed that EC use was likely responsible for up to 43% of the decline in the number of abortions in the United States between 1994 and 2000.

What the Ohio Prevention First Act will do:

- Increase awareness about EC by requiring the Ohio Department of Health to provide medically accurate information about EC to the public and health care professionals.
- Allow pharmacists to dispense EC without a prescription from a physician once the pharmacist has completed training on EC distribution.
- Create a training program for pharmacists to teach them how to properly dispense EC.
- Provide a standardized EC fact sheet for women who obtain EC directly from their pharmacist.



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