



For Immediate Release
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Long-Awaited Non-Prescription Emergency Contraception (EC) Arrives in Pharmacies in Los Angeles and Nationwide

L.A. Has Highest Saturation of Pharmacy Access to EC in CA

Los Angeles, CA – At a news event today hosted by the California EC Network and Pharmacy Access Partnership, California emergency contraception (EC) advocates celebrated the long-anticipated availability of Plan B EC, also known as the “morning-after” pill, which is expected to be available for non-prescription sales this week in pharmacies throughout Los Angeles and nationwide. On November 1, Barr Pharmaceuticals, the manufacturer of Plan B, sent the first shipments of the newly labeled dual-status product to pharmacies across the country.

In August 2006, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Plan B for over-the-counter (OTC) sales to individuals 18 and older. Women 17 and younger and those without proper documentation will still need a prescription to obtain Plan B.

However, in California and in eight other states where EC pharmacy access is available (WA, AK, HI, NM, ME, MA, NH, VT), a specially trained pharmacist (working under a protocol) can initiate a Plan B prescription without requiring an advance prescription from a doctor or clinic. Pharmacy access to EC serves as an essential model of EC provision regardless of the woman’s age.

In Los Angeles County, one in four pharmacies has a pharmacist on staff who can provide Plan B to women of all ages without requiring an advance prescription from a doctor or clinic. Throughout California, 86% of counties have at least one pharmacy that provides Plan B using this model. And, pharmacists in California provide pharmacy access to EC more than any other clinical service.

California’s Family PACT and Medi-Cal enrollees who obtain Plan B from a pharmacy are eligible to receive one pack of Plan B per visit, for a maximum of up to six packs in a 12-month timeframe from any Medi-Cal contracted pharmacy. This applies to women presenting a doctor’s prescription and those seeking EC through a pharmacist-initiated prescription (without first getting a prescription from a doctor or clinic).

Belle Taylor-McGhee, executive director of Pharmacy Access Partnership, says women’s health advocates have joined alliances with pharmacists, medical providers and county health officials to ensure that consumers can access Plan B without delays and unnecessary barriers.

“Pharmacy Access Partnership remains committed to meeting the needs of the women the FDA left behind, including young women and women without proof of age. We will continue to recruit and train pharmacists to provide Plan B to all women who may need this safe and effective back-up birth control,” said Ms. Taylor-McGhee.

Editor’s Note: Pharmacy Access Partnership provides online Plan B OTC Fact Sheets for consumers, pharmacies, pharmacists and pharmacy staff. For more information, please visit our websites: www.PharmacyAccess.org, www.Go2EC.org and www.EC-Help.org. ■

Pharmacy Access Partnership was established in 1999 as a center of the independent, nonprofit Public Health Institute. Its purpose is to expand consumer access to contraceptive commodities and reproductive health services in pharmacies, and to give pharmacies a stronger role in promoting community health. The California EC Network is comprised of public health professionals, policymakers, pharmacists, providers and researcher who work collectively to promote increased access to emergency contraception in California.