

## **ACCESSING NON-PRESCRIPTION EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION: THE BASICS**

**What is emergency contraception (EC)?** EC is an FDA-approved form of contraception also known as the “morning-after pill.” It is an extremely time-sensitive drug that is most effective in the first 12 to 24 hours following unprotected sex, birth control failure, or sexual assault. EC does not affect an existing pregnancy, and should not be confused with the “abortion pill,” known as RU-486.

**What kinds of EC are available?** Currently, there are three versions of EC on the market: (1) Plan B<sup>®</sup>, the original two-tablet product that is still in pharmacies but is being phased out; (2) a generic version of Plan B<sup>®</sup>, called Next Choice<sup>™</sup>; and (3) Plan B<sup>®</sup> One-Step, which is only one tablet.

**Do I need a prescription?** All versions of emergency contraception are available without a prescription for consumers – male or female – who are 17 and older. If you are under 17, you will need a prescription.

**Where is EC sold?** EC is available at pharmacies and health care clinics. The FDA requires that a health professional, such as a pharmacist or a physician, be available to answer questions about EC if needed. As a result, EC is not available in places like gas stations or convenience stores.

**How do I get EC at a pharmacy?** Individuals seeking EC – regardless of their age – need to ask for it at the pharmacy counter. If you are 17 or older, you only need to show identification to prove your age. Anyone behind the pharmacy counter, including pharmacy technicians, can sell non-prescription EC. If you are under 17, you need to present a prescription to the pharmacist.

**But I thought that EC was now “over-the-counter” for individuals 17 and older?** Because of restrictions the FDA placed on EC sales, pharmacies can’t stock EC next to other over-the-counter products like aspirin. “Over-the-counter” means that those 17 and older may purchase EC without first getting a prescription.

**Who can buy EC?** The FDA approved over-the-counter access to EC for all *consumers* age 17 and older. Thus, both women and men who are 17 or older can request the drug at a pharmacy or health clinic, contingent upon showing an appropriate ID.

**What forms of ID do individuals age 17 and older need to buy EC?** The FDA did not list specific forms of ID that must be presented to verify a consumer’s age, and that decision is left to individual pharmacies. A driver’s license or passport is certainly sufficient, and other forms of ID, including ID issued by foreign governments, should be accepted as well.

**I’m under 17 years old. How do I get a prescription?** If you need help getting a prescription, go to <http://www.not-2-late.com>. If you live in AK, CA, HI, ME, MA, NH, NM, VT, or WA you may be able to get EC directly from a pharmacist without first obtaining a prescription. See <http://www.EC-Help.org>.

**How much does EC cost?** Prices for EC vary, but may run as high as \$70. The generic, Next Choice<sup>™</sup>, costs 10-20% less than Plan B<sup>®</sup>.

**We want to know about your EC experience! Call 1-866-Pill4Us or email [info@nwlc.org](mailto:info@nwlc.org) and tell us about your success – or if you run into any problems – obtaining EC.**