



## What Consumers Need to Know about Obtaining Plan B<sup>®</sup> Over-the-Counter in Pharmacies

*On April 22, 2009, the FDA decreased its previous age limitation from 18 to 17 and now allows consumers ages 17 and older to purchase Plan B over the counter (OTC). Even though Plan B is available OTC for some, EC pharmacy access services continue to be especially crucial for younger women, undocumented women, and women without proof of age who are trying to prevent pregnancy within the short window of time that EC is effective.*

**Below are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about Plan B and where to get it OTC**

### **Q: What is Plan B<sup>®</sup> ?**

- Also known as the “morning-after” pill, Plan B<sup>®</sup> is a brand of EC that is a safe and reliable way to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex or birth control failure.
- Plan B<sup>®</sup> contains the same medication as birth control pills and works the same way.
- Plan B<sup>®</sup> should be taken as soon as possible after having unprotected sex. It may work up to five days after sex, but it is more likely to work the sooner it is taken.
- EC WILL NOT cause an abortion (EC is NOT the same as RU-486, the abortion pill).
- EC DOES NOT prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or HIV/AIDS.

### **Q: What EC products are available to consumers?**

- (1) **Plan B<sup>®</sup> One Step**, manufactured by Teva Pharmaceuticals, Inc., is a “dual-labeled” product for both prescription and OTC usage with the following restrictions: prescription for women 16 years and younger and OTC for consumers 17 and older. It contains 1.5 mg levonorgestrel delivered as one tablet.
- (2) **Next Choice<sup>™</sup>**, manufactured by Watson Pharmaceuticals, Inc., is a **generic** EC containing 1.5 mg levonorgestrel delivered in two tablets. It is FDA approved as is a “dual-labeled” product for both prescription and OTC usage with the following restrictions: prescription for women 16 years and younger and OTC for consumers 17 years and older. d
- (3) **Plan B<sup>®</sup>** is a “dual-labeled” product for both prescription and OTC usage with the following restrictions: prescription for women 16 years and younger and OTC for consumers 17 years and older. This product containing 1.5 mg levonorgestrel delivered in two tablets will be phased out and replaced by Plan B<sup>®</sup> One Step; and
- (4) The Yuzpe Regimen is when a designated number of specific, regular birth control pills are used as EC.

### **Q: What does over-the-counter (OTC) mean?**

OTC means the FDA has decided that a drug is safe enough to use without first getting a prescription from a doctor/clinic. The FDA decided to make Plan B<sup>®</sup> OTC only for consumers 17 and older.

### **Q: What is pharmacy access?**

Pharmacy access allows specially trained pharmacists to dispense Plan B<sup>®</sup> to women requesting it and, if medically appropriate, provide it to the woman without an advance prescription from her doctor. Pharmacy access to EC is available in AK, CA, HI, NH, NM, MA, ME, VT, & WA. A list of pharmacies providing this service is available at [www.EC-Help.org](http://www.EC-Help.org)

### **Q: How do I obtain Plan B<sup>®</sup> ?<sup>#</sup>**

#### **I am 17 or older (male or female):**

- **Plan B<sup>®</sup>** is available OTC in pharmacies for a limited time, **OR**
- **Plan B<sup>®</sup> One Step** is available OTC in pharmacies **OR**
- **Next Choice<sup>™</sup>** is a generic form of Plan B available OTC in pharmacies **OR**
- Directly from participating pharmacists in the EC pharmacy access program, if proof of age is not available. \* Visit [www.EC-Help.org](http://www.EC-Help.org) to find a pharmacy near you, **OR**
- From your local health clinic. \*Visit [www.Not-2-Late.com](http://www.Not-2-Late.com) to find a provider near you.

#### **I am 16 or younger (female only):**

- **Plan B<sup>®</sup>** is available by prescription in pharmacies for a limited time, **OR**
- **Plan B<sup>®</sup> One Step** is available by prescription in pharmacies **OR**
- **Next Choice<sup>™</sup>** is a generic form of Plan B available by prescription in pharmacies **OR**
- Directly from pharmacists participating in the EC pharmacy access program.\* Visit [www.EC-Help.org](http://www.EC-Help.org) to find a pharmacy **OR**
- By prescription from your doctor/clinic. Visit [www.Not-2-Late.com](http://www.Not-2-Late.com) to find a provider near you.

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### **Q: Can men purchase Plan B<sup>®</sup> OTC?**

Yes. Men can purchase Plan B<sup>®</sup> if they are 17 and older and show proof of age. Men under 17 CANNOT get a prescription or get Plan B<sup>®</sup> through the EC pharmacy access program.\*

### **Q: How will the pharmacist know if I am under 17?**

Pharmacy staff will ask for proof of age. If you do NOT have identification available, pharmacy staff will most likely refer you to a clinic or doctor to get a prescription. In states with pharmacy access, you can get EC directly from pharmacists participating in the EC pharmacy access program.\* Visit [www.EC-Help.org](http://www.EC-Help.org) to find an EC pharmacy near you.

### **Q: Is EC safe for teens under 17?**

Research shows that EC is NOT harmful to teens. A recent study of young women showed that easier access to EC did NOT increase sexual risk taking. EC neither increases STIs nor reduces use of regular birth-control.

### **Q: Why did the FDA keep Plan B<sup>®</sup> a prescription drug for teens under 17?**

There are NO medical reasons to keep Plan B<sup>®</sup> as a prescription drug for teens under 17. Leading medical organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, agree that access to Plan B<sup>®</sup> should not be restricted by age.

### **Q: Is Plan B on the shelf, along with other OTC products, like condoms?**

No. Plan B is kept behind the pharmacy counter and not on store shelves. Consumers are required to show proof of age (17 and over) to obtain Plan B OTC.

### **Q: How are the rules for Plan B<sup>®</sup> different from those for other behind-the-counter products, like pseudoephedrine?**

The sale of products containing pseudoephedrine (commonly found in OTC cold medications; may be used to produce methamphetamines) is also restricted to sale behind-the-counter or from a locked cabinet. Although some state laws establish age restrictions for pseudoephedrine sales, the FDA does not indicate a specific age requirement, as it does for Plan B<sup>®</sup>, despite the known harmful effects of pseudoephedrine. In contrast, Plan B<sup>®</sup> has been determined by two FDA medical advisory panels to be highly safe and effective for women of all ages.

### **Q: How much does Plan B<sup>®</sup> cost over-the-counter?**

Price varies by pharmacy. Currently the prescription price for Plan B<sup>®</sup> ranges from \$45 – \$65.

### **Q. Will my insurance pay for Plan B<sup>®</sup> as an over-the-counter product?**

Typically when products switch from prescriptions to OTC, they are no longer covered. However, if you have a prescription for Plan B<sup>®</sup> or get EC from a pharmacy access pharmacist,\* the pharmacist can bill private insurance or government funded insurance programs. (Publicly funded insurance programs vary by state; in CA, Medi-Cal and Family PACT cover Plan B<sup>®</sup> with a prescription.)

Nine states (HI, IL, MD, NJ, NM, NY, OK, OR, WA) offer Medicaid coverage of Plan B OTC. For more information visit <http://www.nirhealth.org/sections/ourprograms/documents/ECMedicaidMemoFormatted.pdf>

### **Q: Can the pharmacist charge a consultation fee for Plan B<sup>®</sup> OTC?**

No. When Plan B<sup>®</sup> is purchased OTC, the pharmacist may charge ONLY for the cost of the drug itself. However, if a woman is getting EC via pharmacy access,\* the pharmacist may charge a consultation fee. There is no maximum on how much a pharmacist can charge for consultation before providing Plan B<sup>®</sup> via pharmacy access.

## **Resources**

- For the most up-to-date listing of pharmacies in states with EC Pharmacy Programs: [www.EC-Help.org](http://www.EC-Help.org).
- Additional information on EC and a directory of EC providers in the United States: [www.Not-2-Late.com](http://www.Not-2-Late.com)
- Questions/comments? Call Pharmacy Access Partnership at 510-272-0150 or email [info@pharmacyaccess.org](mailto:info@pharmacyaccess.org).

# As a teen in California you have the right to confidential family planning services, including access to Plan B<sup>®</sup>.

\* Pharmacy access allows specially trained pharmacists to decide if Plan B<sup>®</sup> is right for the woman requesting it and, if medically appropriate, provide it to the woman without a prescription in advance from her doctor or clinic.