



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

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To: All New York State Pharmacies Date: January 10, 2007
CC: New York State Pharmacy Associations
From Lawrence H. Mokhiber, Executive Secretary
New York State Board for Pharmacy
Re: Information for Pharmacy Staff on Plan B[®]

In response to a significant number of questions the following document has been prepared as an informational reference guide for pharmacies and staff where Plan B[®] is, or will be available.

PLAN B[®] AS AN OVER-THE-COUNTER AND PRESCRIPTION PRODUCT

INFORMATION FOR NEW YORK STATE PHARMACISTS AND PHARMACY STAFF

Plan B[®] is used to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex or birth control failure. It is one method of emergency contraception (EC) and is commonly called the “morning-after pill” by consumers. Pharmacists who stock Plan B[®] provide a service for women trying to prevent a pregnancy within the short window of time when emergency contraception is effective.

On August 24, 2006, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Plan B[®] as an over-the-counter (OTC) product for women 18 and older. To obtain Plan B[®], women 17 years and younger still need a prescription from a person authorized to prescribe, pursuant to Title VIII of the New York State Education Law.

Below are some of the most frequently asked questions about how to provide Plan B[®] in pharmacies. The answers represent the most current information we have at this time.

General Questions

What is Plan B[®]?

- According to the FDA guidelines Plan B[®] is an emergency contraception (EC) product approved by the FDA as a safe and reliable way to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex or birth control failure.

- Plan B[®] contains the hormone levonorgestrel, the same hormone found in commonly prescribed birth control pills. The difference is that Plan B[®] contains a larger dose of levonorgestrel than the amount found in a single birth control pill. Plan B[®] packages contain a single 2-dose course of treatment.
- To obtain optimal efficacy, the first tablet should be taken as soon as possible within 72 hours (3 days) of intercourse. The second tablet must be taken 12 hours later.¹
- Plan B[®] WILL NOT cause an abortion; it is NOT the “abortion pill” mifepristone, or RU-486. Plan B[®] will not work if a woman is already pregnant from a previous sexual encounter. If the woman is already pregnant when she takes EC, the developing fetus will not be harmed.
- Plan B[®] DOES NOT prevent HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.

How can consumers access Plan B[®]?

Consumers 18 and older

Plan B[®] is authorized for OTC sale in pharmacies to *women and men* ages 18 and older. Consumers can also obtain Plan B[®] in family planning and other health clinics. In New York City, women can get Plan B[®] in Health Department STD clinics (see resource information below).

Women 17 and younger

Women under 18 years of age must have a prescription from a healthcare provider in order to obtain Plan B[®].

Storage and Sale of Plan B[®]

Must Plan B[®] be kept behind the pharmacy counter?

Yes. A pharmacist or staff with access to these products can provide it to consumers 18 and older with acceptable proof of age. Individual pharmacies will have systems in place to confirm the age of Plan B[®] customers. The FDA requires that a health care professional must be available to answer questions if needed, but anyone behind the pharmacy counter will be able to sell or provide Plan B[®] OTC after seeing proof of age.

What is an acceptable proof of age?

An acceptable proof of age would be an ID that shows a person’s date of birth such as a driver’s license, school ID, passport or other government issue identification. If the ID card does not show a photograph, the ID should include other identifying information such as: name, date of birth, sex, height, color of hair, and address.

Will I need to request proof of age from a consumer who is clearly over age 18?

Pharmacies may implement their own policies.

¹ FDA-approved Plan B[®] packaging.

What if a customer does not have an ID?

Women should be referred to a health practitioner or clinic to obtain a prescription. Because EC is most effective when taken within the 24 hours after unprotected sex, it is helpful for pharmacists to assist the woman in obtaining a prescription that can be called into the pharmacy from a health provider in the community.

Will documentation of the type of ID accepted or anything else about the sale be required?

No, the law does not require documentation

How should pharmacists (and doctors) respond to parents of minors who may want to know why an EC prescription was filled?

All minors in New York have a right to confidential family planning services and products including Plan B[®]. In addition, patient privacy is assured through the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Education and Training

Is special training required for pharmacists and other staff in order to provide Plan B[®] ?

No. However, pharmacists and staff are expected to be informed about Plan B[®] to provide accurate information to consumers when needed. (See the resource list below for websites that offer on-line EC training with continuing education credits for pharmacists and other health care professionals. Training programs are also offered at schools of pharmacy.)

Do I need to provide counseling or give fact sheets to customers who purchase Plan B[®] ?

Yes, counseling is required if this product is dispensed upon a prescription. When EC is provided as an OTC product to those 18 years of age or older, counseling is not required because the packaging contains specific information approved by the FDA. Of course, pharmacists who may be dispensing other medications must follow standard procedures for providing consultation. The pharmacy may also voluntarily distribute educational information about Plan B[®] or referral information, for example, family planning providers, and services to victims of sexual assault and domestic violence (see phone numbers below). A fact sheet concerning EC and victim assistance is forthcoming on www.fpaofnys.org.

How can I obtain educational materials about Plan B[®] for customers?

You can find a fact sheet for New York State consumers on the website of Family Planning Advocates of NYS, www.fpaofnys.org. You can also order free educational materials such as posters and patient brochures by calling the Plan B[®] Information Center at 1-800-330-1271.

Prescriptions for Plan B[®]

Has the FDA limited the number of times a woman can take EC?

The FDA has not limited the number of times women can take Plan B[®]

Why do health practitioners write advance prescriptions for Plan B® ?

Health practitioners may give a woman a prescription for Plan B® so that she will be able to fill it quickly if she needs it. Plan B® is safe and effective for emergency contraception, but it is less effective as a planned form of birth control. Prescribers may also authorize refills.

Increasing Access to EC

What can pharmacists do to increase access of EC?

- Stock Plan B®.
- Let patients know that EC is available at the pharmacy.
- Educate store staff about EC and let them know that the pharmacy has it.

The Family Planning Advocates of NYS has provided the reference information below, and it has been included for your convenience.	
Resources	Contact Information
Information about EC	www.go2planB.com www.go2ec.com www.not-2-late.com (English, Spanish, French, Arabic)
Free posters and brochures for consumers (English and Spanish)	Plan B® Information Center: 1-800-330-1271
Directory of EC providers in the US and Canada.	Visit www.not-2-late.com or 1-888-NOT-2-LATE
Sources of EC in New York City including STD Clinics	In NYC, call 311.
Directory of Family Planning Clinics in New York	www.plannedparenthood.org or 1-800-230-PLAN
24-hour, NYS Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline	1-800-942-6906 (English) 1-800-942-6908 (Spanish)
Information, referral, and programs for victims of sexual assault	www.nyscasa.org
Information, referral, and programs for victims of domestic violence	www.nyscadv.org
Pharmacy Access Partnership American Pharmaceutical Association	www.pharmacyaccess.learnsomething.com www.pharmacist.com/pdf/emergency_contra.pdf