



NARAL
Pro-Choice North Carolina

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

NARAL Pro-Choice North Carolina fully supports efforts to expand women's access to and knowledge about emergency contraception (EC) as part of the campaign to guarantee full reproductive freedom to the women of our state.

How EC Works

Emergency contraception, commonly known as the “morning after pill,” is a form of birth control that can be used to prevent pregnancy *after* sexual intercourse, before fertilization occurs. It does not work once a woman becomes pregnant, and it is administered in the form of a pill. EC is **not** the abortion pill.

Availability of EC in NC

- Women over the age of 17 are legally able to obtain forms of EC over-the-counter in a standard pharmacy
- There are four FDA-approved forms of EC:¹
 1. Next Choice® - Available without a prescription
 2. Plan B One-Step® - Available without a prescription
 3. Levonorgestrel Tablets – Available without a prescription
 4. Ella® - Available only with a prescription and is the only form of EC that provides a longer time frame for the prevention of fertilization

Barriers to EC in NC

- It is not uncommon for pharmacists to tell customers there is no EC in stock or to refuse to distribute EC because of their own moral objections
- Women under age 17 must obtain a physician's prescription to obtain EC
- North Carolina will not include coverage for EC under the newly instated Affordable Care Act. This means that even under the new healthcare plan many NC women will not be financially able to obtain EC²

Since the late 1990s, many states have taken measures to require hospitals to provide EC information, to allow pharmacies to dispense EC without a physician's prescription, and to mandate that pharmacists fill prescriptions regardless of their own opinions on EC. The expansion of EC access has been underway across the US for well over a decade, yet our state has taken none of these steps.

¹ <http://www.nwlc.org/resource/emergency-contraception-barriers-access>

² http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs/spib_ICC.pdf