



# Emergency Contraception Pharmacy Access – *What pharmacists need to know*

## What is emergency contraception?

- Emergency contraception (EC or the “morning-after pill”) is a safe and effective birth control method that can **prevent** pregnancy when used up to 5 days after unprotected sex.
- EC is **not** the abortion pill (RU486). It will not work if a woman is already pregnant.

## What is the emergency contraception Pharmacy Access Program?

- The Massachusetts state legislature passed the EC bill on September 15, 2005. The bill allows pharmacists to dispense EC directly to women under a standing order from a licensed physician without women having to visit their doctor or clinic first.

## What are the benefits of providing EC services in a pharmacy?

- Pharmacies offer a great opportunity for immediate access to EC in urgent situations.
- Providing EC services in the pharmacy will allow you to better meet the needs of your community.
- Wider availability of EC lets pharmacies play a bigger role in promoting community health by reducing the rate of unintended pregnancy.
- Pharmacies can play a role in referring women to primary care and family planning services for ongoing birth control, STD prevention, and other health care.

## How do I sign up to participate?

- The Board of Registration in Pharmacy has posted guidelines on their website for the EC Pharmacy Access Program. You will need to complete an accredited training program, have a standing order signed by a physician, and meet the other prerequisites listed in the guidelines. Model standing orders are available on the Pharmacy Board website.
- If you are interested in participating, please contact the EC Network and we will keep you informed of training opportunities and facilitate the process of obtaining an agreement with a physician. Call 617-556-8800 x15 or go to [www.massECnetwork.org](http://www.massECnetwork.org).
- Please also notify the EC Network if you plan to participate in the EC Pharmacy Access Program so we can list your pharmacy on our website ([www.massECnetwork.org](http://www.massECnetwork.org)) and let women know that you are offering this service.

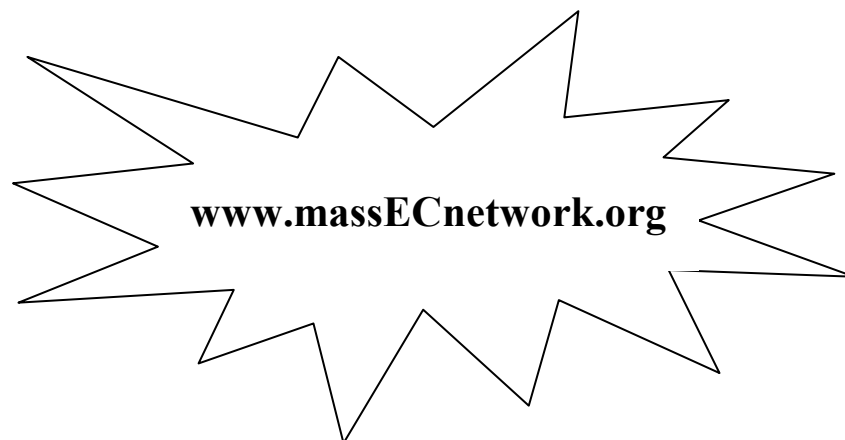
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### Other considerations

- The standing order developed by the Department of Public Health is a model standing order. Physicians can modify this model standing order or develop their own.
- Please note that the model standing orders provided by the Department of Public Health reflect the timing and dosing on the FDA labeling of Plan B. More recent research shows efficacy of Plan B up to 120 hours after unprotected sex and equal efficacy if both doses are taken simultaneously.<sup>1</sup> Under the “Additional Instructions” section of the model standing order, the physician who signs the standing order may choose to amend the protocol to include this or any other instructions.

### What is the Massachusetts EC Network?

- The EC Network is a coalition of medical providers, pharmacists, community organizations, and government agencies working together to improve access to and public knowledge of emergency contraception.



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<sup>1</sup> Von Hertzen H, Piaggio G, Ding J et al. WHO Research Group on post-ovulatory methods of fertility regulation. Low dose mifepristone and two regimens of levonorgestrel for emergency contraception: a WHO multicentre randomised trial. Lancet 2003; 360:1803-18010.