

Morning-After Pill Fight

In August 2006, after years of delays and protests from the feminist community, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced that the Morning-After Pill (brand name *Plan B*) will be sold without a prescription, but only to women over 18. This ruling came despite the recommendation from its own advisory panel in December 2003 that it should be available for women of all ages. The ruling places the Morning-After Pill, which most effectively prevents pregnancy when taken within 24 hours, at a pharmacy behind the counter where all women will have to be carded by a pharmacist. Women under 18 are still required to have a doctor's prescription for this perfectly safe form of birth control.¹

By enforcing an age limit, the FDA bowed to political pressure from the Bush Administration, which has attacked women's rights to birth control and abortion. This decision builds on the right wing's strategy of chipping away at our reproductive rights through restrictions based on age. If we allow ourselves to be divided based on age, our fight for reproductive justice will be weakened.

We, women of all ages, stand together in our demand for full, free access to all forms of birth control, including the Morning-After Pill and abortion.

¹) In addition to the FDA's own scientists, The American Medical Association, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and other mainstream medical groups all recommended over-the-counter status for all ages.

About Us

The Women's Liberation Birth Control Project is an organization that fights for justice for women, including our rights to birth control and abortion. The Birth Control Project helped form a national coalition—the Morning After Pill Conspiracy—which is at the forefront of the fight to make the Morning-After Pill **truly** over-the-counter. The coalition has held sit-ins, speak-outs and rallies, and is suing the FDA to make the Morning-After Pill over-the-counter for all women, regardless of age.¹

Get Involved

The best way to get involved is to join our email list for updates and come to our next meeting.

Meetings are the 2nd Monday of each month

6:30pm - 8:00pm

Raff and Becker Offices

470 Park Ave. South (3rd Floor, North)

Between 31st and 32nd St.

New York, NY

(Subway: 6 Train to 33rd St.)

Contact Info

www.birthcontrolproject.org

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¹) This pamphlet was developed by the Birth Control Project in conjunction with the Morning After Pill Conspiracy Coalition. www.mapconspiracy.org

Restrictions on the Morning After Pill: Women's Stories



www.birthcontrolproject.org



Women Attempt to Obtain the Morning-After Pill

Below are stories from women across the country who have attempted to obtain *Plan B* under the FDA's new "behind-the-counter" policy.

“After going to a Wal-Mart and an Albertson's, both 24-hour stores with closed pharmacies, I found a Walgreen's where the pharmacy was open. I asked the pharmacist for 4 packs of *Plan B*. **She seemed flustered and asked me what kind of birth control I used, and I said condoms.** (There were two men waiting for prescriptions, definitely in earshot). She got 4 packs and then barraged me with invasive questions:

Her: Why do you want so many packs?

Me: To have in case I need them. Why are you asking?

Her: There are restrictions on these pills, which is why I asked you for ID.

Me: But it's hard to find an open pharmacy, that's why I want extra. Plus, I may want to give them to friends.

Her: You can't give them to friends, that would be like giving tobacco to someone under 17.

Me: But what if the friends are over 17?

Her: That's still not okay because we'd want to talk to them about what kind of birth control they use, their options, and make sure they're using something to prevent STDs.

Me: **But it's over-the-counter.**

Her: **Yes but we still want to talk to people about birth control options.** ”

“**I had a very good experience buying it.** It was pretty obvious that I was buying it for my younger sister and the clerk (a middle-aged woman) was totally cool about it and even rolled her eyes that she had to check for my ID at all...she said "It's not like you're buying alcohol or something dangerous.”

“**I went to the pharmacist here in New York City and asked to buy the Morning-After Pill and it was \$45. I went to a pharmacist in France and asked for it and it was \$10.**

When I told her that it was almost \$50 in the U.S., she was totally shocked. She pointed out that the \$10 package they sold in France were from an American company. And she actually encouraged me to buy 10 packets and bring them home for my friends and myself. I didn't have enough euros left to do it. But funnily enough, the very first message I received when I got off the plane in the U.S. was from my friend asking if I had a stockpile of *Plan B* and if she could have one because they were so damn expensive.

“I needed the morning-after pill on a Saturday because of a slipped condom. I sent my boyfriend to get it at the pharmacy. He said that the pharmacist assistant smirked at him when he said he wanted to buy *Plan B*. **Then the pharmacist said, "I can't sell that to you, you could be giving it to a 13 year old for all I know."** When my boyfriend protested, the pharmacist made some calls. After a long while, he conceded that he could sell it to him. Luckily my boyfriend knew he had the right to buy it, but it was definitely not great to have to argue about it in the middle of a drug store line. It was also very expensive—Eckerd sold it for \$37 so we got it there. CVS sold it for \$44. ”

While progress has been made, these stories point to many reasons why these new rules are **not** a full victory.

- The age restriction does not protect young women; instead, it puts teenagers at risk for unplanned pregnancy.
- Pharmacies are only open 10-12 hours per day and the Morning-After Pill decreases in effectiveness as time elapses.
- Women are now being forced to answer inappropriate questions about their sex lives in a public area. Why should women have to answer invasive questions in a drug store line when *Plan B* is supposed to be over-the-counter?
- At \$40-\$50, *Plan B* is extremely expensive. Why does it cost \$10 in France, but \$50 here?