



WOMEN'S HEALTH

Helping Women Control Their Health

(NAPSA)—A new type of program has given women easier access to healthcare when they may need it the most.

The initiative allows women to get emergency contraception (EC) from participating pharmacies without first visiting a doctor or clinic. Experts consider the program successful, citing nearly 500 participating pharmacies.

Before a woman is given EC, a specially trained pharmacist asks a few questions to make sure the treatment is right for her. If EC is determined to be appropriate, the pharmacist gives the woman the pills to take orally and gives her written information on EC to take home.

Doctors say the approach is necessary because EC only works if taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex or birth control failure. That is not always enough time for women to get to their doctors, should they feel EC is needed (whether the visit is due to a condom breaking, having unplanned sex without protection or forgetting to take their birth control).

"EC Pharmacy Programs are being embraced by pharmacies, healthcare providers and consumers, in urban, rural and remote areas of the state," said Jane Boggess, Ph.D., director of the



A new program gives women easier access to healthcare professionals.

Pharmacy Access Partnership in California, where the program is currently in place. "Reducing rates for unintended pregnancy is an important public health priority for California. Improved access to emergency contraception could prevent half of all unintended pregnancies and greatly reduce the number of abortions performed each year."

EC will not work if a woman is already pregnant, and it is not the same as RU-486—which is sometimes called the "abortion pill."

For more information, visit www.EC-Help.org or call 1-800-323-1336.

Note to Editors: The EC Pharmacy Program is available in Alaska, California, and Washington, and soon will be available in New Mexico.