

FSRH statement on safety of emergency contraception

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Emergency contraception (EC) is an essential part of sexual and reproductive healthcare (SRH) and contraceptive choices. Access to emergency contraception is an important way of reducing unintended pregnancies.

The bulk of the available evidence suggests that increased accessibility of oral EC does not increase the frequency of unprotected sex, the likelihood of sexual risk-taking and does not make women less likely to use effective contraception.¹

FSRH supports the provision of free emergency contraception, as is the case in Scotland and Wales. While EC is free in some places in England many women will choose to access it in pharmacies where cost and opening times vary considerably. Relentless cuts to local authority budgets - 5% of the total budget will be removed this year - mean that free schemes are being cut and SRH clinics are having to reduce provision.

Local community pharmacies are an essential source of advice and provision of EC.

Dr Jane Dickson, FSRH Vice President, Strategy, said:

“The safety of EC is backed up by scientific evidence. EC is extremely safe with occasional minor side effects.

The real issue when it comes to EC is access, both in terms of pricing and availability of pharmacists/pharmacies at the time of need, and not necessarily the mandatory consultation with pharmacists per se.

Therefore, the value of a consultation with a pharmacist is that it is an opportunity to assess how likely this form of EC is to work, not as an assessment of safety. There may be times when EC will simply not work, resulting in unintended pregnancies. In these cases, women must be informed that the most effective option would be an emergency IUD.”

Ends

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Notes to editors:

- The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH) is the largest UK professional membership organisation working at the heart of sexual and reproductive health (SRH), supporting healthcare professionals to deliver high quality care. It works with its 15,000

¹ FSRH, 2017. Emergency Contraception. [online] Available at: < <https://www.fsrh.org/standards-and-guidance/current-clinical-guidance/emergency-contraception/> >

members, to shape sexual reproductive health for all. It produces evidence-based clinical guidance, standards, training, qualifications and research into SRH. It also delivers conferences and publishes The Journal of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care. For more information please visit: www.fsrh.org

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