



CWHS

Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Emergency contraception (EC), also widely known as the “morning-after pill,” has the potential to reduce unintended pregnancy when used up to 120 hours after unprotected sex or in cases where a known contraceptive failure such as a broken condom occurs.¹ EC is not intended for use as a regular contraceptive method and should not be confused with medical abortion drugs such as mifepristone (RU-486).¹ In August 2006, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved over-the-counter access through pharmacies for Plan B, one type of EC, for women and men ages 18 and older.¹

The annual California Women's Health Survey (CWHS) included questions about EC awareness and knowledge of where to obtain EC, which were sponsored by the Office of Family Planning. Both the 2006 and 2007 CWHS asked the question: “To the best of your knowledge, if a woman has unprotected sex is there anything she can do in the three days following intercourse that will prevent pregnancy?” Those who responded “Yes” to this question were asked: “What can she do?” In 2006, women were asked “Do you know where she can get emergency contraception if she needed it?” and in 2007 this question was revised to: “If she needed to obtain emergency contraception, also known as the ‘morning-after pill’, where would she go to get it?” This revised question was intended to gauge knowledge of obtaining EC over-the-counter. Data from 5,283 women ages 18-49 included in the combined 2006 and 2007 surveys were used.² Results were weighted in these analyses by age and race/ethnicity

to reflect the 2000 California adult female population.

The highlight are as follows:

- Seven in ten women (70.7 percent) responded that there was something a woman could do after unprotected sex to prevent pregnancy; this perception was highest among White women (83.8 percent) and lowest among Hispanic women (54.4 percent).
- EC awareness varied across socio-demographic subgroups: 84.5 percent of women with college or higher education versus 40.5 percent of women with less than high school; 80.7 percent of women above 200 percent of federal poverty level (FPL) versus 57.8 percent of women at or below 200 percent FPL; 75.1 percent of women at risk of unintended pregnancy³ versus 66.2 percent of those who were not (see Figure 1).
- When women were asked: “What can she do?” more than eight in ten women (85.1 percent) answered correctly⁴ about EC. Women at risk of unintended pregnancy were more likely to answer correctly about EC (88.1 percent) than women who were not at risk (82.2 percent).
- In 2006, of those who knew about EC, 83.2 percent replied they knew where a woman could obtain EC when needed; 94.5 percent of African Americans/Blacks, 83.5 percent each for Whites and Hispanics, and 73.3 percent of Asians/Pacific Islanders.⁶

Awareness of Emergency Contraception Among California Women, 2006-2007

California Department of Public Health
Office of Family Planning

Public Health Message:

High awareness of emergency contraception among women at risk of unintended pregnancy is encouraging. However, there is still a need to provide information regarding emergency contraception to at-risk, low-income, and less-educated women. Knowledge about pharmacy access to emergency contraception is low, but higher among foreign-born than U.S.-born women.

Issue 6, Fall 2010, Num. 2

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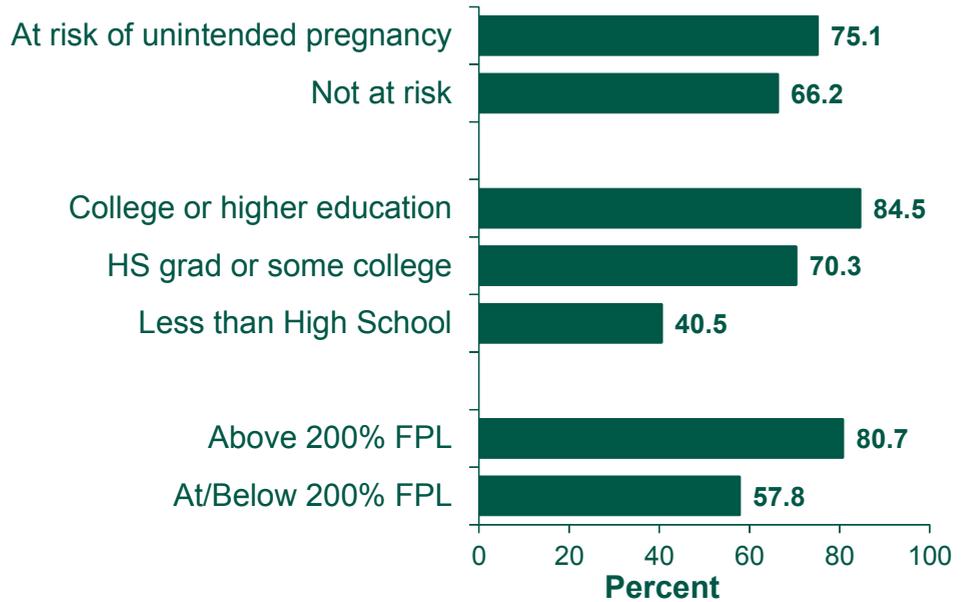
- In 2007, of women who were aware of EC, 51.1 percent identified a doctor's office/hospital as the place where EC could be obtained if needed, 23.8 percent replied school nurse or clinic, and 19.4 percent identified pharmacy.

The remaining 5.1 percent said they did not know, were not sure, or incorrectly identified where to obtain EC. The pharmacy response was higher among foreign-born women (24.6 percent) than U.S.-born women (17.6 percent).

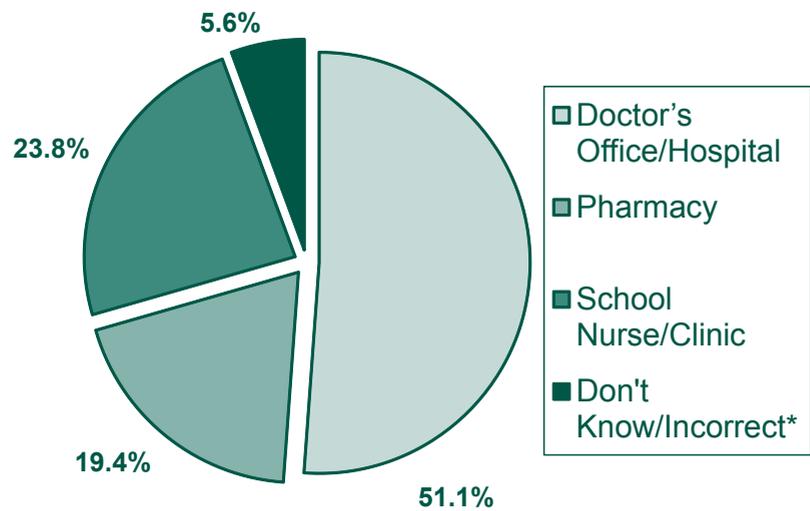
Figure 1

"Awareness of Emergency Contraception (EC) and Knowledge of Where to Obtain EC Among California Women Ages 18-49, 2006-2007"

EC Awareness, 2006-2007



Knowledge Where to Get EC, 2007



*Incorrect responses included "a friend" or "convenience store"
Source: California Women's Health Survey, 2006-2007

*Awareness of Emergency
Contraception Among
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- 1 Princeton University, Office of Population Research and Association of Reproductive Health Professionals. The Emergency Contraception Web site. <http://ec.princeton.edu/questions/what-fda-says.html>. Updated July 12, 2010. Accessed on 11/3/2008
- 2 Data was combined only for the question that was included in both the 2006 and 2007 surveys; otherwise single year data were used.
- 3 Women were considered at risk of unintended pregnancy if sexually active and not pregnant, not trying to get pregnant, sterilized, nor infertile.
- 4 Women were classified as answering correctly when they specifically mentioned use of Plan B or emergency contraception pills (83.3 percent), mentioned insertion of intrauterine device, or taking a stronger type of contraceptive pill (1.8 percent).
- 5 $p < 0.0001$, chi-square test
- 6 $p < 0.05$, chi-square test

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