



Promoting Promiscuity

The morning after pill

The current situation

The Government intends to make the morning after pill available without prescription from Chemists to women and girls aged over 16. This new measure provisionally came into force on 1 January 2001, but either House of Parliament has the right to quash this move within forty days of the order being tabled.

The order tabled by the Government can be ‘annulled’ by a vote in either House. Baroness Young has tabled an annulment motion. A vote is expected in The House of Lords on Monday 29 January 2001.

William Hague MP and Liam Fox MP have also tabled a similar motion in the House of Commons.¹

How the morning after pill works

The morning after pill, named *Levonelle* – 2, is taken to prevent conception up to 72 hours after intercourse. If conception has already occurred the pill prevents the embryo implanting in the lining of the womb. Levonelle can therefore act as a form of abortion (from a Christian, though not a legal, perspective).

A reckless policy

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- An over-the-counter sale facilitates irresponsible behaviour.
- It promotes sex without any forethought whatsoever.
- Rather than going ahead with this, it’s time to question the wisdom of those whose philosophy has so comprehensively failed.



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The failure of “safer sex” approaches

- The Department of Health admits: “Virtually all the sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are increasing. . . . There has been no reduction in the annual number of new diagnoses of HIV made and the latest annual figures (1999) saw the highest number of new HIV diagnoses ever recorded.”⁶
- Sex education has been mandatory in schools for ten years focussing on the “safer sex” message. Contraception is available free on the NHS. Condoms are readily available in supermarkets & petrol stations.
- **Despite all this**, in the past ten years the teenage **pregnancy rates** have not fallen. The UK now has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Western Europe.²
- The **abortion rates** of 16-19 year olds have risen by 50% since 1975.³
- The **numbers of girls having under age sex** has increased fivefold in one generation. Nearly a quarter of girls born in 1974 had sex before they were 16. For those born in the 1950s it was 5%.⁴
- “Safer sex” has also failed in the USA. New approaches focussing on abstinence have been spectacularly successful in many states.

The morning after pill encourages unsafe sex

- Almost by definition asking for the morning after pill means you have had unsafe sex.
- A study has shown that the availability of the morning after pill lessens the likelihood that condoms will be used.⁵

This will increase the incidence of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

- Complications of STD’s include: *Cancer, meningitis, blindness, heart and liver infections, infertility, ectopic pregnancy, arthritis, pelvic pain, vaginal discharge of pus, hair loss.*
- According to the Teenage Pregnancy White Paper (page 6), in a single act of unprotected sex with an infected person a teenage girl has a:
 - (a) 1% chance of acquiring HIV;
 - (b) 30% chance of getting genital herpes, and;
 - (c) 50% chance of contracting gonorrhoea.



Virtually no safeguards

- It will be a simple matter for under age girls to claim they are 16.
- No one can be sure about the **long-term effects** of repeated use since there are no appropriate studies.
- Chemists are banned from talking to GPs because of patient confidentiality. This means doctors don't know whether their patients have taken the morning after pill and chemists have limited information about the medical history of their client.
- Chemists admit privately that record keeping of over-the-counter drugs is often cursory or non-existent.

The price is bound to fall

- If the Government's plans go ahead, before too long the price will fall from £20. Already some clinics are offering it for £10.
- Supermarkets with in-store pharmacies want to sell cut-price drugs. Eventually the retail price maintenance system for drugs will be ended. The price of the morning after pill will then plummet.

References

- ¹ See Early Day Motion 120 [Medicines] (SI 2000 No 3231) in session 2000/2001
- ² *Teenage Pregnancy*, A White Paper (Cm 4342), The Social Exclusion Unit, June 1999, page 6
- ³ Figures taken from *1997 & 1999 Abortion Statistics Series AB nos.24 & 26*, Office for National Statistics, The Stationery Office, 1998 and 2000. See Table A, page x (1997 statistics) and Table 15b, page 16 (1999 statistics)
- ⁴ *Population Trends 100*, Summer 2000, The Stationery Office, page 38
- ⁵ Judith Roizen, *Letter to The Times*, 16 December 2000
- ⁶ *National Sexual Health and HIV Strategy*, Department of Health, 25 September 2000 at <http://www.doh.gov.uk/nshs/background.htm>
- ⁷ Prescription Only Medicines (Human Use) Amendment Order 2000, 17 July 2000



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Summary

- The Government wants to make the morning after pill available without prescription to women aged 16 and over.
- This is a reckless policy because:
 - (a) It promotes teenage promiscuity
 - (b) It encourages unsafe sex
 - (c) This will increase the incidence of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)
 - (d) It has virtually no safeguards
 - (e) Chemists are just the start
- This policy can be overturned if peers vote for Lady Young's motion to annul on Monday 29 January 2001.

Note

In a separate move (not affected by this vote), some school nurses are prescribing the morning after pill to girls. Chemists are also lawfully giving the pills to 15 year old girls. This is because some health authorities are using new legal powers given to them by the Government⁷ to allow nurses and Pharmacists to prescribe drugs directly.

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