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Women's Health Advocates to Teens: It's Time to Back Up Your Birth Control with Emergency Contraception

"What do I do if the condom breaks? What happens if I forget to take my pill? If I am forced to have sex, can I prevent pregnancy?" Most Americans don't know the answers to these questions, especially teenagers.

The *Back Up Your Birth Control* Campaign is committed to spreading the word about emergency contraception, a safe and effective method of back up birth control. This year, on March 20, the sixth annual *Back Up Your Birth Control* Day of Action, a coalition of more than 100 women's health and medical organizations will undertake dozens of educational activities nationwide to send an important message to teens: back up your birth control with emergency contraception.

The United States has the highest rates of teen pregnancy and births in the western industrialized world. Teen pregnancy costs the United States at least \$9 billion annually. *[Include local teen pregnancy statistic here. Search www.teenpregnancy.org for state information, or your state department of health for county information.]*

EC has enormous potential to reduce the country's high rate of unintended pregnancy, especially among teenagers. However, in order to truly expand EC access, improved public education is needed to ensure that all women, regardless of age, have the tools and information they need to prevent unintended pregnancies with EC.

In the fall of 2006, the FDA approved over-the-counter (OTC) sales of EC for adult women, but kept the prescription requirement for teens younger than 18. The FDA's decision is an incomplete victory for all Americans who are interested in reducing our high rates of teen pregnancy. Many young women, due to the age restriction, are now excluded from timely OTC access as a result of the FDA's decision.

The *Back Up Your Birth Control* Campaign understands that promoting knowledge and use of this safe and effective back up birth control method is even more important than ever. That's why the *Back Up Your Birth Control* Campaign is mobilizing thousands of activist around the country to educate the media and medical community and host *Back Up Your Birth Control* EC education activities on college campuses, with legislators, and for public health officials.

[Add information here on your BUYBC activities for the BUYBC Day of Action]

Emergency contraception is highly safe and effective method of birth control that can prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex, but only if used within the first few days after unprotected sex or contraceptive failure. The sooner it's taken, the better it works.