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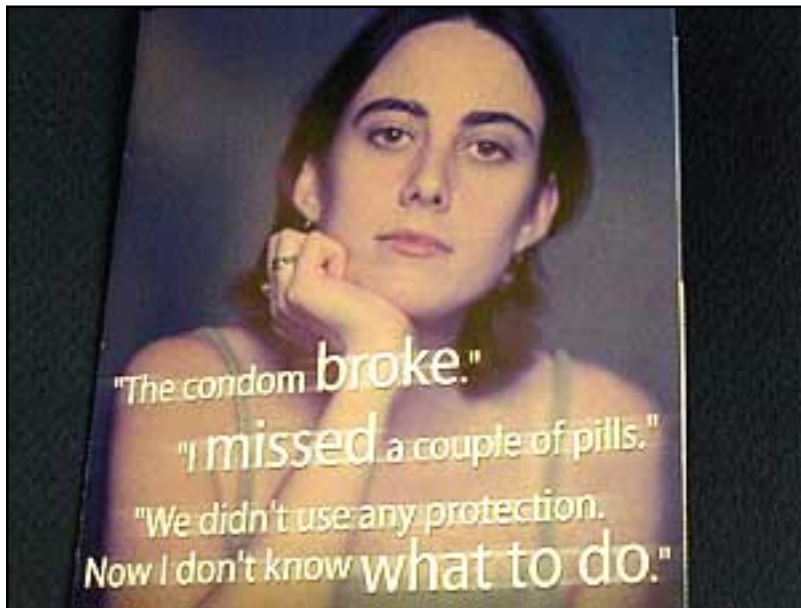
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## Little pill sparks new debate

by [Cara Hetland](#), Minnesota Public Radio  
*April 18, 2003*



*This brochure will arrive in mailboxes all across South Dakota. Planned Parenthood wants women to know there's a choice in birth control. (Cara Hetland)*

**A new marketing campaign in South Dakota is sparking an old debate. This time a birth control pill is the target. Officials from Planned Parenthood want women to know there are medical options besides abortion. Opponents of legal abortion says the pill promotes promiscuity and is an easy fix.**

Sioux Falls, S.D. — The little pill getting all the attention has two names. Its brand name is Plan B. The generic version is called Emergency Contraception. Planned Parenthood of South Dakota and Minnesota wants women to know about the pill. New television and newspaper ads promote the pill as a safeguard against an unwanted pregnancy.

"We didn't use any protection and now I don't know what to do. I missed a couple of pills. The condom broke," the ad begins. "You don't have to hold your breath and wait to see if you're pregnant. Emergency Contraception or EC will safely prevent pregnancy up to five days after unwanted or unprotected sex."

The pill requires a prescription. The ad tells women to call their doctor or to go to Planned Parenthood.

"We just really feel that this is such an important element in women's health,"

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[Ad for Plan B pill](#)

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 [Kate Looby](#)

says Kate Looby, South Dakota's director of Planned Parenthood. "We felt there was a lack of knowledge among women in South Dakota especially, and we needed to do something to raise awareness about Emergency Contraception. It's a safe, effective backup birth control method, and the women of South Dakota need to know about it."


Looby wouldn't say how much they're spending on the marketing campaign. She would say it's part of a national effort to educate women about birth control choices.

Planned Parenthood officials designed the marketing campaign just for South Dakota women. There are about 800 abortions performed in South Dakota each year. Looby says that number would decline if more people knew about Emergency Contraception. She says some women should have it in their medicine cabinet.

"We actually encourage some people to consider doing that. Especially if you're using condoms as your primary method of birth control, or natural family planning as your primary method of birth control -- and something happens and you have intercourse at a time when you're pretty sure you're fertile," says Looby.

To get a Plan B pill at Planned Parenthood, a woman would have to take a pregnancy test first. That and the pill costs about \$50.



 [Leslie Unruh](#)

Opponents of legal abortion say it's an abortion pill and nothing less. Leslie Unruh is the president of the Alpha Center and Abstinence Clearinghouse.

"I think this is teaching irresponsibility by passing out pills, powders and potions, and just hoping that it's going to help somebody. I believe it's going to cause medical problems in a lot of women," says Unruh.

Unruh says there are medical side effects to the mega-dose of hormones, including high blood pressure. She says women don't get that information from a TV ad or brochure in the mail. Unruh calls Emergency Contraceptive a quick fix for a woman who may be in a crisis situation.

"When you're in a crisis, you're just looking for a quick answer -- a quick easy answer -- which is what this is," says Unruh. "It isn't necessarily what you're going to live with that's going to help you live. The depression in women, the drug taking, the drinking after you make these kinds of decisions -- it's like training you to play mind games with yourself."

Unruh counsels women who have had or are considering an abortion. She says many women will regret taking the pill.

Unruh and Looby agree the best form of birth control is abstinence. Looby says if a woman chooses to be sexually active, then she needs to know how to prevent unwanted pregnancies. Unruh says a woman needs to make her




choices before she gets into bed. She says the Abstinence Clearinghouse will launch its own marketing campaign after they raise the funds.

"I could give you the game plan, but that wouldn't be very wise of me at this time, because then the other side would know. We have a plan and it's a good one," says Unruh. "We always plan to win. We always play offense and we never play defense."


Unruh says the campaign for the Plan B pill will open up another chapter in South Dakota's abortion debate. Only this time the debate is over a little pill.

In two states -- Washington and California -- women can get the Plan B pill without a prescription.

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