

Emergency Contraception in National Essential Medicines Lists

Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECPs) are an essential component of women's reproductive health. They offer women an important second chance to prevent pregnancy when a regular method fails, no method was used, or sex was forced. Research over the past 30 years has shown that ECPs are safe and effective.

The most recent (March 2011) World Health Organization's Essential Medicines List (EML) includes one form of ECP, containing levonorgestrel (LNG) as an active ingredient. While other drugs can be used for EC, only the LNG form is listed by the WHO at this time. The WHO list includes two regimen options for LNG ECPs: two tablets of 0.75 milligrams, or one tablet of 1.5 milligrams (mg). (These may also be written as 750 micrograms and 1500 micrograms (µg).) Either regimen can be used; although the two-pill regimen is labeled for the pills to be taken 12 hours apart, the current recommendation is for both pills to be taken together as a single 1.5 mg dose.

A number of countries have shared their national EMLs on the WHO website¹; others have been shared via personal correspondence. Those that include ECPs are listed below, with the year of publication; two countries specify a different method of EC, based taking a higher dose of regular oral contraceptives (called the "Yuzpe" regimen). The countries whose EMLs are available but do not include EC are also listed. However, the fact that a country does not include EC in its EMLs does not mean there is no product registered or on the market. For those countries with no EC listed in its EML, we have listed whether or not EC is available locally.

Of the 113 countries with available EMLs, 58 countries are known to list ECPs:
5 include only the 1.5 mg dose. **36 include only the 0.75 mg dose.**
11 include both the 1.5 and 0.75 mg doses. **4 include LNG but do not specify the dose.**
2 include the Yuzpe regimen (high dose of regular oral contraceptives as EC).

55 countries do not include ECPs. Of these, 7 do not include any contraceptives.

5 National EMLs are known to include only the 1.5 mg ECP regimen:

Brazil: 2010
Cook Islands: 2007

Peru: 2010
Tunisia: Year unknown

Ghana: 2010

36 National EMLs are known to include only the 0.75 mg ECP regimen:

Algeria: 2006
Armenia: 2010
Bhutan: 2009
Bolivia: 2011
Burkina Faso: 2007
Burundi: 2009
Cape Verde: 2009
Chile: 2005
Dem. Rep. of Congo: 2010
Dominican Republic: 2005
Ecuador: Undated
Fiji: 2006

Gabon: Year unknown
Georgia: 2007
Iran: 2009
Jamaica: 2008
Kenya: 2003
Kyrgyzstan: 2009
Malawi: 2009
Mali: 2008
Mexico: 2010
Nauru: 2010
Niue: 2006
Paraguay: 2009

Rwanda: 2010
Senegal: 2008
Seychelles: 2010
Solomon Islands: 2010
South Africa: 2008
Sri Lanka: 2009
Sudan: 2007
Suriname: 2004
Sweden: 2004
Thailand: 2008
Tuvalu: 2008
Uganda: 2012

11 National EMLs are known to include both the 1.5 and 0.75 mg ECP regimens:

Belize: 2009-2011	Moldova: 2009	Russia: 2012
Cameroon: 2009	Myanmar: Year unknown	St. Vincent & the Grenadines: 2010
Congo: 2008	Nepal: 2009	Tajikistan: 2009
Laos: 2012	Pakistan: 2007	

4 National EMLs are known to include LNG ECPs without specifying indication or dose:

Central African Rep.: 2009	Syria: 2008	Ukraine: 2009
China: 2009		

2 National EMLs are known to include only the Yuzpe regimen (high dose of regular oral contraceptives as EC):

Tanzania: 2007	Zimbabwe: 2006
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55 National EMLs are known NOT to include ECPs:

Afghanistan: 2007	Guyana: 2009	Namibia: 2008 (<i>EC product registered</i>)
Angola: 2008 (<i>no contraceptives in EML; no EC product registered, but allows for import with license</i>)	Haiti: National Strategic Plan for Health, 2003-2008	Nicaragua: year unknown (<i>EC product registered</i>)
Argentina: 2005 (<i>EC product registered</i>)	Honduras: 2009-11	Nigeria: 2003 (<i>EC product registered</i>)
Bangladesh: 2008 (<i>EC product registered</i>)	India: 2011 (<i>no contraceptives in EML, but EC product registered</i>)	North Korea: 1999, list for international agencies (<i>no contraceptives</i>)
Barbados: 2011 (<i>EC product registered</i>)	Indonesia: 2008 (<i>Listed as removed since 2005 edition</i>) (<i>EC product registered</i>)	Oman: 2009
Bulgaria: 2009 (<i>EC product registered</i>)	Iraq: 2010	Palau: 2006
Cambodia: 2003 (<i>EC product registered</i>)	Jordan: 2009 (<i>no contraceptives in EML</i>)	Papua New Guinea: 2002
Chad: 2007 (<i>no EC product registered, but allows for import with license</i>)	Kiribati: 2009	Philippines: 2008
Colombia: 2011 (<i>no contraceptives in EML, but EC product registered</i>)	Lesotho: 2005 (<i>no contraceptives in EML, but EC product registered</i>)	Poland: 2009 (<i>EC product registered</i>)
Cote d'Ivoire: Year unknown (<i>EC product registered</i>)	Macedonia: 2010 (<i>no contraceptives in EML, but EC product registered</i>)	Serbia: 2010 (<i>EC product registered</i>)
Croatia: 2010 (<i>EC product registered</i>)	Madagascar: 2008 (<i>EC product registered</i>)	Slovakia: 2010 (<i>EC product registered</i>)
Djibouti: 2007 (<i>EC product registered</i>)	Malaysia: 2008 (<i>EC product registered</i>)	Slovenia: 2010 (<i>EC product registered</i>)
Egypt: 2006 (<i>EC product registered</i>)	Maldives: 2009	Somalia: 2007 (<i>no contraceptives in EML</i>)
El Salvador: 2011 (<i>EC product registered</i>)	Malta: 2008 (<i>EC product registered</i>)	Timor Leste: 2004
Eritrea: 2010	Marshall Islands: 2007 (<i>no contraceptives in EML</i>)	Togo: 2006 (<i>EC product registered</i>)
Ethiopia: 2010 (<i>EC product registered</i>)	Mauritania: 2007 (<i>EC product registered</i>)	Tonga: 2007
	Montenegro: 2011 (<i>EC product registered</i>)	Trinidad: 2010 (<i>EC product registered</i>)
	Morocco: 2008 (<i>no contraceptives in EML, but EC product registered</i>)	Uruguay: 2011 (<i>EC product registered</i>)
		Vanuatu: 2007
		Venezuela: 2004 (<i>EC product registered</i>)
		Yemen: 2007 (<i>EC product registered</i>)

¹ World Health Organization. "National Medicines List/Formulary/Standard Treatment Guidelines." Web site: www.who.int/selection_medicines/country_lists/en/index.html.



A note on methodology: ICEC downloaded all the available EMLs from the WHO website in December 2012 and used the “find” function to search for the following key words: levonorgestrel, norgestrel, contraception, and emergency contraception.

¹ World Health Organization. “National Medicines List/Formulary/Standard Treatment Guidelines.” Web site: www.who.int/selection_medicines/country_lists/en/index.html.



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