

HSE launches Emergency Hormonal Contraception (EHC) awareness campaign, in partnership with IPU

The HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme (SHCPP) is implementing a national public awareness campaign this month, in partnership with the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU). The campaign aims to increase awareness about the availability of Emergency Hormonal Contraception (EHC) directly from a pharmacy. The campaign will launch on 12 November 2018.

Independent market research, carried out in December 2017, found that one in five women are not aware that EHC is available directly from pharmacists, without a prescription. The report, *Sexual Health in Ireland: What Do We Know?*, published by SHCPP in June 2018, also highlights that:

- Half of self-reported crisis pregnancies are associated with contraceptive failure;
- Half of self-reported crisis pregnancies are associated with non-use of contraception;
- Half of those failing to use contraception were unaware of the risk of pregnancy at that time.



The EHC campaign will focus on informing women that if they have unprotected sex or their contraception fails, they can avail of EHC directly from their community pharmacist. The target audience is all women of child-bearing age.

The IPU and the HSE SHCPP previously worked together on a successful EHC campaign in 2012. This campaign was promoted across all community pharmacies and the campaign message was well received. The HSE and IPU are using the same messaging for this year's campaign.

There are a number of elements to the campaign,

which will run primarily via digital media. Social media posts and adverts will be created with key messages and Google Search AdWords will direct people to www.sexualwellbeing.ie for further information. A media kit, including suggested posts and images, will be provided via the IPU website, prior to the campaign launch.

A window sticker and poster will be posted to all IPU pharmacy members prior to the campaign launch to complement the online messaging and to further raise awareness that EHC is available in your pharmacy.



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Key campaign messages

- EHC is available without prescription from pharmacies.
- The sooner you take emergency contraception, the more effective it is.
- You can avail of emergency contraception that is effective up to five days after sexual intercourse.
- Women with medical cards can get EHC free-of-charge directly from the pharmacy, without the need for a prescription.

What can you do?

Pharmacists have an important role to play in ensuring that women have access to EHC in a timely manner. You can get involved in this campaign and let your patients know that they can visit your pharmacy if they require EHC by:

- **Displaying the campaign materials** – display the window sticker and / or poster prominently in your pharmacy window, or door, so that your patients know that you provide EHC; and
- **Sharing the message** – support the campaign by sharing the key campaign messages and content on your social media channels. This will help to increase the number of people who will see the messaging.

Pharmacists play a pivotal part in communicating broader sexual health messages to the public. If a woman requires EHC from you, it is a good opportunity to discuss contraception with her. The www.sexualwellbeing.ie website covers all aspects of sexual health and wellbeing including the different contraception options available.