

**For Immediate Release**

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**Understanding and Accessing Emergency Contraception**

Polk-Norman-Mahnomen Community Health Services, including Polk County Public Health and Norman-Mahnomen Public Health, is committed to ensuring our communities have access to comprehensive reproductive and sexual health services, with a particular focus on supporting adolescents. It is important to empower individuals to make informed decisions about their sexual health, including the prevention of unintended pregnancies.

Emergency contraceptives, often called the “morning-after pill,” is an effective option for preventing pregnancy after unprotected sex or contraceptive failure. While primary methods of birth control—such as pills, patches, rings, Depo injections, and Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives (LARCs) like IUDs and implants—are used before sex to prevent pregnancy, emergency contraceptives can be used after sex when primary birth control methods fail or are not used.

Emergency contraceptives are designed to temporarily delay ovulation (the release of an egg from the ovary), reducing the chance of fertilization. It does not cause an abortion and will not harm an existing pregnancy. It must be taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex for optimal effectiveness. The sooner it is taken, the better it works. Emergency contraception does not interfere with regular birth control methods, so you can resume or begin a regular contraceptive method immediately. When used as directed, emergency contraception is both safe and effective.

Emergency contraception is available at major retailers, smaller pharmacies, and food stores without a prescription, ID, or age restriction. Common brands include Plan B One-Step, Take Action, MyWay, and others, all containing Levonorgestrel 1.5 mg. Adolescents have the legal right to access emergency contraception without parental consent.

Polk-Norman-Mahnomen Community Health Services provides confidential Sexual and Reproductive Health services, including access to emergency contraceptives following a brief nurse visit. Services are offered at low to no cost, and no one is turned away due to inability to pay. For questions or to schedule an appointment, contact Norman-Mahnomen Public Health at 218-935-2527 or text 218-280-3894. For Polk County Public Health, call 218-281-3385 or text 218-280-1117.

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