

## Brazil to Start Offering Free Morning After Pill

Contributed by Paula Menna Barreto  
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The aim of the new Brazilian policy of Family Planning, launched yesterday, is to ensure the rights of men and women, adults and adolescents, when it comes to sexual and reproductive health.

Circulating information and distributing condoms, among other measures, are part of the plans of the government, which distributed approximately 257 million male condoms in 2003.

In the same year nearly 585 thousand babies were born to adolescent mothers in deliveries performed in the public health system.

Elizabeth Saar, a sociologist and legislative adviser with the Cfemea (Feminist Study and Advisory Center) in the area of female health, argues in favor of this policy in every possible sense.

In her view, initiating the orientation of young people on sexuality at the age of 10, for example, represents an attitude that corresponds to popular demand.

"More and more we are witnessing an increase in the number of pregnancies among girls between 10 and 14 years old," she affirms.

Saar contends that the State is responsible for offering all existing contraceptive means, while people have the right to decide whether or not to have children.

"Family planning is up to each person. Whether or not to have children is a personal decision," she declares.

It is for this reason, to guarantee this right, that, this year, the Ministry of Health will also begin distributing emergency birth control pills, the so-called morning after pills, in 5,223 Brazilian cities.

In Saar's opinion, this pill should not be viewed as a regular contraceptive technique. "It entails certain health consequences, but it must be offered, since it is an effective way to avoid an undesired pregnancy," she claims.

Nevertheless, she says that it is necessary to inform women and reinforce the message that this pill is not a regular contraceptive method.

Translation: David Silberstein  
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