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Emergency Contraceptives Disappear from Russian Pharmacies – Vyorstka

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Sergei Bulkin / News.ru / TASS

Emergency contraceptives and medical abortion drugs have all but disappeared from Russian pharmacy shelves after authorities imposed tighter controls on medications containing the drug mifepristone, the investigative outlet Vyorstka reported Wednesday.

The Health Ministry regulation, introduced amid a nationwide demographic crisis and record-low birth rates, has sharply curtailed public access to a range of contraceptive medications.

Under the new rules, which took effect in September 2024, mifepristone has been added to the country's official List of Regulated Substances, classifying it alongside powerful hormonal and psychotropic drugs.

Patients must now present a special prescription form typically reserved for tightly controlled substances to obtain the medication, while pharmacies must document every transaction involving the drug and report them to federal medical regulator Roszdravnadzor.

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Two widely used mifepristone-based emergency contraceptives, Jenale and Ginepriston, have vanished from pharmacies entirely, Vyorstka reported.

Searches of the online catalogs for major pharmacy chains — including Gorzdrav, Eapteka and Apteki.ru — show no mifepristone-based products available for purchase. Rigla, one of the largest national chains, lists the drugs but shows them as out of stock.

Representatives for six large pharmacy chains confirmed the nationwide unavailability of mifepristone to Vyorstka but were unable to explain the disruption or provide timelines for restocking.

Mifepristone is the active ingredient in several critical reproductive health medications.

A 10-milligram dose is commonly prescribed as emergency contraception. The 200-milligram dose is used to induce medical abortions and has long been restricted to hospital settings, where it is administered under medical supervision.

The supply crisis appears to extend beyond retail availability. In March, the Kommersant business daily reported that shipments of mifepristone and misoprostol, another drug used in medical abortions, to Russian hospitals had declined by one-third in 2024.

According to pharmaceutical industry data from RNC Pharma cited by Kommersant, only 636,300 packages were delivered to medical institutions that year, down from 938,000 in 2023. Analysts say that represents the lowest consumption levels ever recorded.

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