

THE PILL OVER THE COUNTER: INCREASING ACCESS

In a major breakthrough, 2024 marks the first year that birth control pill users are able to buy Opill, often called the “mini-pill,” on store shelves without a prescription. A second type of birth control pill — a combined oral contraceptive (COC), the most common form of the Pill — is expected to also be sold on store shelves within a few years.

ANOTHER SAFE OVER-THE-COUNTER CONTRACEPTIVE OPTION

- In 2024, people will have another accessible option for preventing pregnancy when the birth control “mini-pill” is sold without a prescription on store shelves.
- Momentum is building to ensure the pill is affordable for all.
- A second contraceptive pill— the COC, the most common form of the Pill—is expected to complete the FDA approval process for OTC status within a few years.

WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FOR OVER-THE-COUNTER ACCESS

- Major medical associations have studied the evidence and support the effort to achieve over-the-counter access.
- A large majority—70%—of reproductive-aged women support making the contraceptive pill available over the counter without a prescription.

REDUCING BARRIERS

- People who may benefit the most from the pill on the shelf are those in rural areas, people who can’t afford doctor visits, hourly workers who cannot easily get time off of work, people in between insurance plans and those who want a more convenient option.
- An affordable pill over the counter without restrictions would make it easier for people to physically and logistically access birth control in their communities.
- Access to safe and effective birth control over the counter will reduce unintended pregnancies.
- The contraceptive pill is the most common form of reversible contraception in the United States.
- One in three women currently using a less effective birth control method report they would start using the pill if it were available over the counter.

“ *The American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists supports over-the-counter access to hormonal contraception without age restrictions.* ”

- ACOG’s Committee on Gynecologic Practice Opinion
(Pub. Oct. 2019; Reaffirmed 2021)

TIMELINE: FIVE DECADES OF SAFETY EVIDENCE AND RESEARCH

1960

The FDA approves the birth control pill for contraception.

2004

The OCs OTC Working Group forms to explore the potential of over-the-counter access to oral contraceptives.

2015

The FDA begins the review process for a switch to OTC status for two types of birth control pills.

2023

The FDA approves OTC status for Opill, a progestin-only birth control pill.

2026

Possible FDA decision on a second OTC birth control pill, the COC.