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### **Dear OCs OTC Working Group Member,**

In this newsletter, we are excited to share that the Women's Preventive Services Initiative Advisory Panel and Multidisciplinary Steering Committee have released draft recommendations for women's preventive health care services, including the HRSA-sponsored Women's Preventive Services Guidelines. We are thrilled to report that their recommendations on contraception and contraceptive counseling include over-the-counter methods without a prescription, which, if put into effect, could mean that in the future a woman could get insurance coverage for an OTC OC without cost sharing and without needing to obtain a prescription first for that coverage to kick in. They are soliciting public comment through September 30. You can read more about this important effort below. Please help promote this public comment period, and voice your support!

We are also debuting a brand new resource that we created on online prescription access to the pill. Here you will find a comprehensive list of companies in the US and globally that issue prescriptions for the pill online, without requiring an in-person doctor visit. We also include insurance coverage information for the US companies.

Additionally, we provide updates on pharmacy access in Tennessee and in Quebec. While we are excited by these developments that make

it easier to access birth control pills, we are also motivated to increase our efforts to make a birth control pill available over the counter in the US to address some of the gaps that pharmacy and online access do not address.

Finally, we wanted to share some of the inspirational messages that we have received from the many people who write to us about their desire for an over-the-counter pill.

We look forward to seeing those of you who can make it to our annual working group meeting on September 20 in Washington, DC!

Thank you,



Kate Grindlay  
Project Director/ Associate  
Ibis Reproductive Health

**Women's Preventive Services Initiative public comment period**



On September 1, the Women's Preventive Services Initiative (WPSI) Advisory Panel and Multidisciplinary Steering Committee released draft recommendations for women's preventive health care services, including the HRSA-sponsored Women's Preventive Services Guidelines. Through a collaborative agreement with the US Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the WPSI is overseen by a coalition of professional organization representatives and consumer and patient advocates with expertise in women's health for the purpose of developing, reviewing, and updating recommendations for women's preventive health care services.

Currently, the HRSA-sponsored guidelines require insurance coverage without cost sharing of the full range of FDA-approved methods, including

OTC methods used by women, though insurers can require a prescription. We are excited that the [draft recommendation on Contraception and Contraceptive Counseling](#) recommends for consideration over-the-counter contraceptive methods without a prescription as a preventive service!

They have also recommended that adolescent and adult women have access to all contraceptive methods currently identified by the FDA, including sterilization surgery for men and male condoms, whereas the HRSA-sponsored guidelines exclude contraceptive services for men.

The call for public comment closes on **September 30, 2016**. If you are providing comments on behalf of an organization, include the organization's name and contact information. If you are commenting as an individual, submit identifying or contact information. Please do not include personal health information in your comments. See the [public comment page](#) for instructions on leaving high quality comments including the categories for types of comments and ethical guidelines.

### Online prescription access to the pill



The ability to access the birth control pill through websites and phone apps has been increasing and receiving a lot of media attention. Free the Pill's new, international guide puts all of this information in one place. Here you will find the company, web address, age limitations, regional limitations, and (for the US companies) how to get it covered by insurance. Please help us to [share this chart](#) with your networks! We will be updating this regularly as we learn about new resources. If you have information about any website that offers online pill prescriptions that we are missing, please [let us know!](#)

### Pharmacy access in Tennessee

Tennessee signed a [pharmacy access bill](#) into law in April. Pharmacists must

practice under a collaborative agreement with an authorized prescriber, and can only provide self-administered hormonal contraception to individuals 18 and over. The bill received bipartisan support.

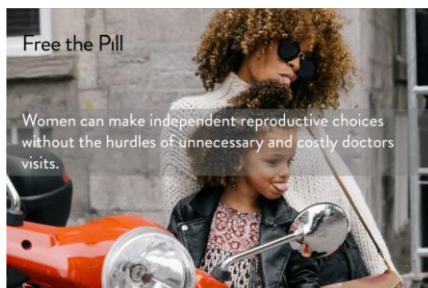
[Washington state](#) also allows pharmacists to provide hormonal contraception under a collaborative practice agreement, and this past legislative session the state enacted a law to promote awareness of this program in pharmacies. In [California](#) and [Oregon](#), pharmacists can prescribe self-administered hormonal methods, and do not need collaborative practice agreements with authorized prescribers.

### Pharmacy access in Quebec



Over the past few months, we have been sharing updates on the increasing number of US states passing and introducing pharmacy access pills for self-administered hormonal contraception, like the pill, patch, ring, and injectables. In June 2015, a pharmacy access bill passed in the Canadian province of Quebec. [Bill 41](#), an act to amend the Pharmacy Act, expands the role of pharmacists by authorizing them to renew prescriptions for a certain period of time, adjust prescriptions, and prescribe certain medications. This includes allowing pharmacists to dispense a three-month birth control prescription following a prescription for emergency contraceptives. This prescription can only be renewed once. A subsequent bill ([Bill 28](#)) also allows pharmacists to bill for their new responsibilities. As we have learned from the Washington state experience, lack of reimbursement for pharmacists' time can compromise sustainability; it is great to see this included in Quebec.

### Free the Pill Voices



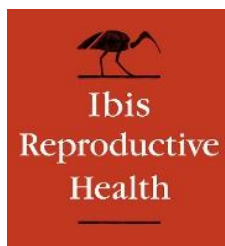
[Free the Pill Voices](#) has a new layout. We are continuing to update this

section of the website with the voices of the public who write to us. We encourage you to scroll through and share these images containing quotes with everyday reasons for why there should be a birth control pill available over the counter in the US.

## About us

The Oral Contraceptives (OCs) Over-the-Counter (OTC) Working Group is a coalition of reproductive health, rights, and justice organizations, nonprofit research and advocacy groups, university-based researchers, and prominent clinicians who share a commitment to providing all women of reproductive age easier access to safe, effective, acceptable, and affordable contraceptives. The working group was established in 2004 to explore the potential of over-the-counter access to oral contraceptives to reduce disparities in reproductive health care access and outcomes, and to increase opportunities for women to access a safe, effective method of contraception, free of unnecessary control, as part of a healthy sexual and reproductive life.

The working group is coordinated by Ibis Reproductive Health.



[www.ibisreproductivehealth.org](http://www.ibisreproductivehealth.org)

## Contact us

**For questions or inquiries, please contact us at:**

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