



November 20, 2012

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Dear Colleague,

Today the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) released a Committee Opinion that gives full support for over-the-counter access to oral contraceptives. The document appears in the December issue of *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, and ACOG's press release is included below. ACOG reviewed much of the published evidence documenting the safety and effectiveness of OTC access to OCs, and weighing the risks and benefits, they conclude that OCs should be available OTC. They also note that women are interested in obtaining pills OTC and that removing the prescription requirement might help to reduce the high rate of unintended pregnancy in the US. At the same time, ACOG highlights some potential concerns about OTC access, including the cost of an OTC product, whether insurance will cover it, and whether pharmacists might refuse to provide the method if it were available in a pharmacy access model without a prescription.

We applaud ACOG for this bold statement that is clearly supported by a great deal of medical evidence. We hope that this will help motivate a pharmaceutical company to move forward with the necessary research to switch an OC product from prescription-only to OTC.

We will post links to press coverage of the ACOG Opinion on the [Resources page](#) of the OCsOTC website. In addition to coverage in the print media, we understand there will be a segment on the CBS Evening News about this tonight. We have also set up a [Facebook page](#) for the working group, and we hope that you will "like" us and spread the word as people discuss this news. We will also be Tweeting using the hashtags #OCsOTC and #freethepill.

Please let me know if you have any questions or comments.

Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan", is positioned below the text "Thanks,".

Daniel Grossman, MD
Vice President for Research, Ibis Reproductive Health

ACOG Committee Opinion: Ob-gyns want the pill available OTC

Washington, DC -- Oral contraceptives (OCs) should be sold over the counter (OTC) in drugstores without a doctor's prescription, according to The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (The College). Easier access to OCs should help lower the nation's high unintended pregnancy rate, a rate that has not changed over the past 20 years and costs taxpayers an estimated \$11.1 billion annually.

Cost, access, and convenience issues are common reasons why women do not use contraception or use it inconsistently. There are no OCs currently approved for OTC access, but The College believes OTC availability will improve women's access to and usage of contraception. The benefits of making OCs easily accessible OTC outweigh the risks, says The College.

Even though no drug is risk-free, the overall consensus is that OCs are safe. There is a risk of blood clots with OC use, but it is extremely low and significantly lower than the risk of blood clots during pregnancy and the postpartum period. The College points out that aspirin and acetaminophen are both available OTC even though they have well-known health risks.

Studies show women support OTC access to OCs and are able to self-screen with checklists to determine their health risks. Evidence also shows that women will continue seeing their doctor for screening and preventive services even when allowed to purchase OCs without a prescription or doctor's appointment. Women who receive more than one month's supply of OCs at a time have higher contraceptive continuation rates than those who receive fewer pill packs.

Committee Opinion #544 "Over-the-Counter Access to Oral Contraceptives" is published in the December 2012 issue of *Obstetrics & Gynecology*.

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Get involved in the OCs OTC Working Group!

There are several ways you can get involved in the working group. 1) "Like" us on [Facebook page!](#) 2) Sign on to our [statement of purpose](#). We welcome both institutional and individual endorsements. 3) Write a blog post, op-ed, or piece in your organization's newsletter or campus newspaper. If you are interested in this, we would be happy to help provide feedback and background articles, as well as help you think about ways to frame the piece. 4) Tweet about OCs OTC using the hashtags #OCsOTC and #freethepill. 5) Email [Dan](#) or [Kate](#) with any questions, comments, feedback, or other ideas.

About us

The Oral Contraceptives (OCs) Over-the-Counter (OTC) Working Group is an informal coalition of reproductive health and rights organizations, nonprofit research and advocacy groups, university-based researchers, and prominent clinicians who share an interest in women's health and access to contraception. Our goal is to evaluate objectively the risks and benefits of demedicalizing contraceptive care, with an eye toward improving access to OCs and potentially other hormonal contraceptive methods by making them available without a prescription.

The working group is coordinated by Ibis Reproductive Health.



www.ibisreproductivehealth.org

Contact us

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