

Free the Pill

It's time for an over-the-counter birth control pill.

What are we waiting for?

We want a future where everyone has the resources they need to make decisions about their own bodies and lives with dignity. If someone wants to avoid pregnancy, they should have access to safe and effective birth control. Each of us should have the freedom to determine our own life path, including what our family looks like. Birth control is critical to making this happen.

Birth control pills are safe and effective, but there are currently too many barriers to access them. Research shows that current prescription requirements make it more difficult to obtain and consistently use birth control pills. It's time we have an FDA-approved over-the-counter (OTC) birth control pill, which would make it easier for people of all ages, across the country, to determine whether and when to become parents and give them greater control over their lives and reproductive health. The pill is one of the best-studied medicines on the market today, and decades of research and experience show it's safe and effective for over-the-counter use. **Any over-the-counter birth control pill needs to be:**

- ✓ Priced affordably
- ✓ Covered by insurance, and
- ✓ Available to all, including young people

PATHWAYS TO IMPROVE ACCESS:

- **Insurance coverage for OTC contraception**
Public and private insurance coverage of OTC contraception, including emergency contraception, condoms, and a future OTC pill, is a crucial part of expanding birth control access. Bills such as the *Affordability Is Access Act*, introduced in 2015, would ensure insurance coverage of a future OTC oral contraceptive.
- **The Affordable Care Act's (ACA) contraceptive coverage guarantee**
The ACA has helped millions of women access reproductive health care, and the provision requiring insurance coverage of female-initiated birth control (including OTC methods) is a crucial component of that access.
- **Food and Drug Administration (FDA) review of a manufacturer's application for an OTC pill**
The FDA makes the decision about whether to approve a prescription-only birth control pill for OTC access based on a careful evaluation of scientific and medical evidence.

Access

There are many extra costs associated with getting a birth control prescription, including costs related to a doctor's visit, missing work, and transportation.

For people who don't have much money, young people, people of color, and immigrants, overcoming obstacles to getting birth control is even more difficult.

Safety

All birth control pills, including progestin-only pills (POPs) and combined oral contraceptives (COCs), which contain both progestin and estrogen, are safe and highly effective at preventing pregnancy.

Major medical organizations like the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the American Academy of Pediatrics support making birth control pills available over the counter as safe, effective, and beneficial to overall health and well-being.

Access for Young People

Everyone hopes that parents and guardians are understanding and supportive, but not every young person has that. Young people should have the tools they need to take care of their health. It may be difficult for parents to think about young people being sexually active, but an over-the-counter birth control pill gives them another option to avoid pregnancy.

Insurance Coverage

True access means affordability. Birth control pills must be covered by insurance, whether they're available over the counter or prescribed by a provider. OTC access to birth control pills is not a replacement for insurance coverage of oral contraceptives and other birth control methods—it is one important piece of increasing overall access to birth control.

*Free the Pill, operated by Ibis Reproductive Health, is a campaign to educate and engage the public in support of an over-the-counter birth control pill option in the United States. The campaign supports an over-the-counter pill that is affordable, covered by insurance, and available to people of all ages without a prescription. More than 90 organizations representing **national, state, and local reproductive health, rights, and justice advocates, researchers, and health care providers** share a commitment to providing easier access to safe, effective, and affordable contraceptives, especially for those who currently face the greatest barriers, and support making birth control pills available over the counter.*