

# Free the Pill

## Pharmacy access vs. Over-the-counter access:

### What's the difference?

We're closer than ever to having the first over-the-counter (OTC) birth control pill in the United States. In the meantime, several states have expanded access by passing laws to allow pharmacists to prescribe the pill as well as other hormonal contraceptive methods, including the patch, ring, and/or shot. Oftentimes pharmacist prescribing is mistakenly referred to as "over-the-counter" access, but that's not exactly accurate. Pharmacy access is a huge step toward greater birth control access for everyone, but it can only happen one state at a time. We can go further in expanding access to contraception by making birth control pills available over the counter. Here, we break down the biggest differences between the two models.

	Pharmacy Access	OTC Access
Location of pills	Behind the pharmacy counter	On store shelves
Prescription	Required	Not required
Health care provider visit	Required (with pharmacist)	Not required
Age restriction	May apply	May apply Based on the evidence, Free the Pill advocates for any OTC birth control pill to be approved for people of all ages
Insurance coverage	Depends	Depends Free the Pill advocates for full coverage of OTC birth control pills
Hours of availability	When a pharmacist who meets state requirements is available	During store hours
Contraceptive method(s) available	Many products and brands at a time	One brand/formulation at a time First-ever application for an OTC progestin-only birth control pill currently under review by FDA
Process to expand access	State legislation, one state at a time	FDA approval, nationwide