



Over the counter or available from a pharmacy?

We break down the differences between these two innovative types of birth control access

So you heard the pill is "over the counter" (OTC) in California, Oregon, and Washington and may be coming to other states soon! While that would be very exciting, it is not exactly right. **The pill is not yet available OTC**. In these states, pharmacists are now allowed to **prescribe** the pill and other hormonal methods, including the birth control patch, the vaginal ring, and/or the shot.

So you no longer have to see a doctor for that Rx. While this is a **BIG** step forward in expanding access for millions of people, it is not the same as being truly over the counter.

Here's how the two models differ:

	PHARMACY ACCESS	OTC ACCESS
Where the birth control is located	Behind the pharmacy counter	On store shelves
Prescription required	Yes Issued by pharmacist	No
Doctor visit required	No	No
Age restriction	May apply For example, California's pharmacy bill does not have an age restriction; Oregon's has an age restriction of 18+ unless the minor has a previous prescription	May apply There was a long legal fight before emergency contraception was approved for women of all ages; the OCs OTC Working Group wants to see an OTC pill on the drug store shelf without an age restriction
Insurance coverage	Yes Insurer may or may not cover the fee for a pharmacist to screen women annually	Depends Some insurers may require a prescription for coverage of OTC methods
Hours of availability	When a pharmacist is available	Store hours
Method(s) available	Many products/brands at a time Methods included depend on the state; for example, Oregon includes all pills and patches; California also includes other methods like the shot and vaginal ring	One product/brand at a time Emergency contraception (like Plan B One-Step) is currently OTC; when a birth control pill becomes available OTC, it will happen one brand at a time
Religious objections may apply	Yes In many states, if a pharmacist objects, s/he must refer you to someone who can/will provide	Yes Store may refuse to stock it
Mechanism to happen	State by state legislation	FDA approval, nationwide

For more information go to www.FreeThePill.org