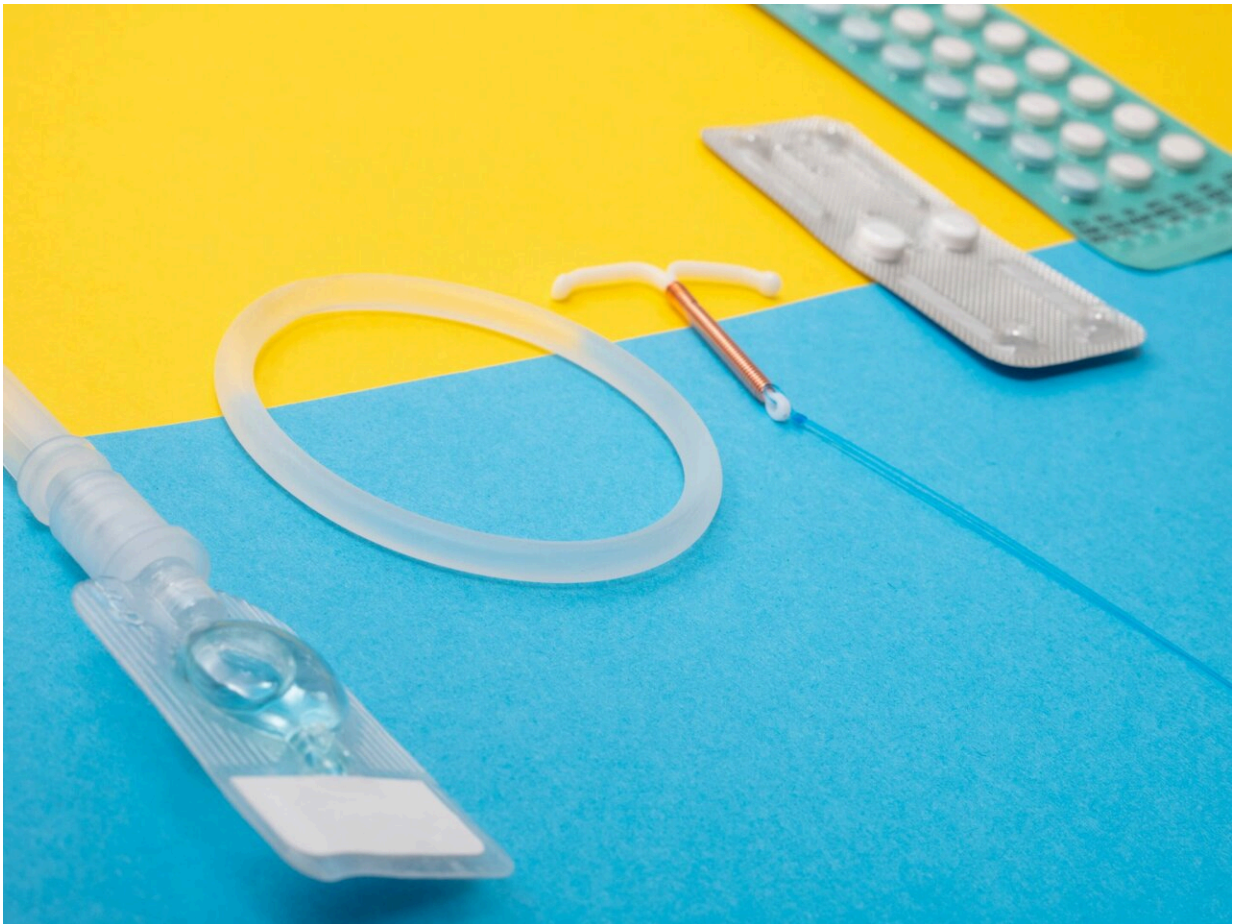


No-prescription birth control pills soon available in US pharmacies

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Prescription-free birth control pills will be available across the United

States later this month, widening access to contraception at a time when abortion rights have been drastically curtailed.

American-Irish maker Perrigo Company announced Monday that its Opill has "shipped to major retailers and pharmacies and will be available on shelves nationwide," available in one-month and three-month packs for \$19.99 and \$49.99 respectively. It will also be available on Opill.com.

Over-the-counter (OTC) birth control has long been backed by major medical organizations as a way to reduce barriers to contraception access, with almost half of the more than 6.1 million pregnancies in the US each year unintended, according to official data.

"We champion the right of women and people to determine their own sexual health journey and the availability of Opill over-the-counter is truly a historic moment of which our entire organization can be proud," said Perrigo Executive Vice President Triona Schmelter.

Opill, which was cleared last year by the Food and Drug Administration for sale without prescription, is known as a "mini pill" because it contains progestin only, and works by thickening mucus in the cervix to stop sperm reaching an egg.

Preserving access to contraception has proven politically divisive following the conservative-led Supreme Court's decision to revoke the national right to abortion in 2022.

Twenty-one states banned or moved to restrict abortions to limits tighter than before *Roe v Wade*, the case law that previously upheld the constitutional right to terminate a pregnancy.

Republicans in Congress also blocked Democrat-backed legislation that

would have codified individuals' right to access contraception, an issue that has taken on more urgency as conservative-run states define personhood in new ways.

Alabama's top court last month said that frozen embryos should be considered children, though the state's legislature quickly moved to pass a bill protecting clinics from legal liability if such embryos were inadvertently damaged or destroyed.

Growing global movement

Over-the-counter birth control is backed by major medical organizations, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Family Physicians.

Activists have long campaigned for prescription-free access to remove barriers to groups that have difficulty accessing health care, including ethnic minorities, young people, immigrants, those living in rural communities and more.

Since they do not contain the hormone estrogen, progestin-only pills have been found to be safe for nearly everyone, including women who are over 35 and smoke, women who are breastfeeding, and those with health conditions such as heart disease.

If taken correctly—every day within a three-hour-window—they are 99 percent effective. But with inconsistent use, which is more typical, the figure falls to around 93 percent.

Much of Asia, Africa and Latin America allow OTC birth control. The UK joined the club in 2021, but prescriptions are still required in much of mainland Europe including France, Germany, Spain and Italy,

according to the "Free the Pill" movement.

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