

Arizona Pharmacists Able to Dispense Birth Control

Background

- Bipartisan law (SB1082) passed in 2021, but had yet to be implemented.
- The law did not take immediate effect as rules from AZ Board of Pharmacy needed to be developed and were released as a standing order this summer (July 2023).
- The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) have advocated for easier access to birth control for more than a decade.

The Law & Standing Order

- The law allows **pharmacists to dispense hormonal birth control methods* for adults** (18+) without a doctor's prescription.
- The standing order **includes access to pills, patches and rings*** (for ongoing birth control) as well as for **emergency contraception**, which helps prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex.
 - For emergency contraception, this includes Ulipristal (ella), which is more effective than Plan B for patients whose weight is >195 pounds.
- Pharmacists shall obtain and review a self-assessment from patients to dispense contraceptives.

Pros & Cons

- Critical step in ensuring that **contraception is accessible** at a time when access to and protection of the right to contraception faces threats.
- Self-administered hormonal contraception **improves community health and well-being**, reduces global maternal mortality, creates health benefits of pregnancy spacing for maternal and child health and more.
- **The order allows, but does not require** pharmacists to dispense contraceptives.
- Mandated 3-hour training for pharmacists; **implementation will take time.**
- May be a challenge for people in rural and underserved areas of AZ who may not have access to a healthcare provider or pharmacy.
- Pharmacies within trusted Title X health centers are able to implement the processes to dispense contraceptives, however, Affirm does not yet have guidance from our federal funders on if Title X will cover birth control dispensed by a pharmacist.

*Please note pharmacists are not able to dispense the Depo-shot.

Over the Counter (OTC) Oral Contraceptive – the Opill

FDA Approval

- On July 13, 2023, the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) **approved Opill (norgestrel) tablet for nonprescription use to prevent pregnancy.**
- Contraceptive efficacy of norgestrel was established in 1973 with original approval for prescription use.
- There was overwhelming public support during the comment period for OTC approval, especially from young people.
- FDA found the public health benefit of Opill far outweighed any safety concerns.

Opill Details

- **Progestin-only pill**
- **First daily oral contraceptive** approved for use in the U.S. without a prescription.
- Most common side effects include irregular bleeding, headaches, dizziness, nausea, increased appetite, abdominal pain, cramps or bloating.
- Contraindications include breast cancer or history of breast cancer.
- Oral contraceptives do not protect against transmission of sexually transmitted infections.

Projected Benefits

- Opill **further ensures contraceptive access and choice** nationwide.
- In early 2024, consumers will be able to purchase birth control **at drug stores, convenience stores, grocery stores and, even, online.**
- Reduces barriers to access by allowing individuals to obtain an oral contraceptive **without the need to first see a health care provider.**
- No age restrictions.

Currently Unknown

- Will Opill be affordable?
- How will Opill function with public and private insurances?

Updated: August 24, 2023