Oregon Pharmacists Can Now Prescribe Birth Control Over the Counter

January 7, 2016

Oregon has become the first U.S. state to legalize over-the-counter birth control. Under the new law, pharmacists are allowed to prescribe birth control pills directly to patients, UPI reports.

This move means an individual no longer needs a doctor's approval to obtain a supply of birth control pills, and is the first legislation of its kind in the country. California is reportedly scheduled to follow the precedent.

At the pharmacy, any Oregonian older than age 18 can fill out a health questionnaire that trained pharmacists will use to determine their eligibility for a prescription.

Oregon pharmacists are also reportedly free to refuse to prescribe birth control pills for religious reasons. These pharmacists, however, must refer those requesting the contraceptives to another participating pharmacist. Also, pharmacists must attend a mandatory state-led training session before they are permitted to prescribe birth control pills to their patients.

In light of the new law, health professionals strongly suggest that women regularly visit an OB-GYN, regardless of the easy access to birth control pills. Many stress that cervical cancer is still a common (and preventable) reproductive issue among women.

"Just having birth control accessible through a pharmacist doesn't mean preventive health care isn't important," said Alison Edelman, MD, a supporter of the new law, in an interview with Oregon news outlets.

This birth control law is part of a wave of progressive legislation sweeping through Oregon this year, including automated vote registrations, paid sick days, and LGBT-friendly language on state marriage licenses.

Did you know that health researchers have made significant strides in developing a male birth control pill? Click here for more information.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.