

How to Answer Student Questions on Over-The-Counter Birth Control

OPILL IS APPEARING IN STORES AND STUDENTS ARE STARTING TO ASK ABOUT IT.

Teachers who cover sex education in schools have long been a source of sexual health information for students. If you have a Sex Ed unit coming up, we encourage you to check out the following:

- [AMAZE Video on Opill](#)
- [Videos on birth control myths, and Opill safety](#)
- [Bedsider Opill FAQ](#)
- [Amaze.org](#)
- [3Rs Sex Education Curriculum](#)
 - [Birth Control Basics - 8th Grade](#)
 - [Know Your Options - 10th Grade](#)

But we know your students might ask you about the new birth control pills they're seeing in stores and online. Here's a handy list of suggested responses you can use:

Do you have to go to a doctor before getting on birth control pills?

ANSWER: It's always a good idea to talk to a doctor or healthcare professional before starting hormonal birth control. But if that's not possible for you, there is a product you can buy at a drug store or online called Opill that is just as effective in preventing pregnancy. Be sure to read the directions and follow them exactly.

How does it work?

ANSWER: The medication in Opill (Norgestrel) was first approved for use in the U.S. in 1973. Opill is the same formulation that has been studied and proven safe for over 50 years, just available over-the-counter. Taking Opill once a day at the same time everyday will thicken cervical mucus to block sperm from reaching an egg. It takes 48 hours after your first dose for Opill to start being effective, but when taken as directed, Opill is 98% effective at preventing pregnancy. But remember, birth control pills do NOT protect against STIs, so it's important to use both birth control pills and condoms.

Do you have to take Opill at the exact same time every day?

ANSWER: Yes, Opill should be taken at the same time every day for it to be most effective. If the exact time is missed, it is suggested to take the pill within a 3-hour window of your normal time. If you miss a pill or go past that 3-hour window, you should use a backup form of birth control such as condoms. With perfect use, Opill is 98% effective at preventing pregnancy.

Is this the same as the morning-after pill (emergency contraception)?

ANSWER: No! Not at all. Opill is a birth control pill you take every single day to *prevent* pregnancy. Emergency contraception is a single pill taken *after* unprotected sex, but before you are pregnant.

Do you need to be 18 to buy Opill?

ANSWER: No. The FDA determined that Opill is so safe that it should be treated just like condoms, Advil or Emergency Contraception like Plan B. The store should not ask for your ID when buying it. But of course, it's often a good idea to talk to a parent or trusted adult before you decide to use birth control.

If I'm under 18, do my parents need to buy it for me?

ANSWER: No. While it's often a good idea to talk to a parent or trusted adult before you decide to use birth control, Opill can be purchased online or at drug stores just like condoms or Emergency Contraception - no prescription, no I.D. check. Although if you'd like, someone else can buy it for you, such as a parent, grandparent, partner, or trusted friend.

How much does it cost? What if I can't afford it?

ANSWER: Opill costs around \$20 for a one-month pack, \$50 for a 3-month supply, and \$80 for a 6-month supply. In some states, Medicaid or private insurance does cover the cost of over-the-counter birth control, but for the vast majority of people, Opill will not be covered. If that's too much money, there is also a cost assistance program available online at OpillCAP.com

What's in Opill?

ANSWER: Opill is a progestin-only pill, so it contains only one type of hormone, progestin, whereas many prescription birth control pills contain both estrogen and progestin. There are fewer conditions that would prevent someone from being able to take a progestin-only pill like Opill. People are often prescribed a progestin-only pill if they can't take estrogen for some reason.

Can I use Opill for other problems like cramps, heavy periods or acne?

ANSWER: Opill is only approved to prevent pregnancy. If there are other issues you've heard birth control pills may help with, it's better to ask a healthcare professional first.

Will Opill make me gain weight or affect whether I can have kids in the future?

ANSWER: No! These are myths! The research is clear: there is **no link** between taking birth control pills and weight gain, and birth control has zero (yes ZERO!) impact on your ability to have kids later in life, if you choose to.

Is this now the only way to get birth control pills?

ANSWER: Absolutely not! People can still go to the doctor for a prescription just like always, and insurance will cover the cost. Opill is simply one more option in case visiting the doctor for a prescription is difficult, burdensome, or impossible.