OB-GYNs advocate for over-the-counter birth control pills

By ACSH Staff — November 26, 2012

Women should be able to get birth control pills without a prescription, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommended last week [1]. Over-the-counter birth control availability has the potential to reduce unintended pregnancies which make up half of all pregnancies in the United States because lack of access to the pill is one of the main reasons that women fail to use contraception.

But before birth control pills are sold over the counter, a company would need Food and Drug Administration approval, and it’s not clear that any are considering going through that lengthy process. Furthermore, there has been some concern about bypassing the parent-child discussion, but the OB-GYN college’s Dr. Jill Rabin stressed the importance of being realistic in order to keep kids safe and healthy.

People expressing concern about interfering or discouraging parent-child discourse or even about the health risks of young-teen access to birth control pills fail to take account of the actual problem: Teens have sex and young teens get pregnant. This is a health issue, certainly, since pregnancy at that age and among that demographic is a high-risk situation. Further, teen pregnancy is a huge personal disruption for the girl and her family, and all too often leads to abortion. Teen pregnancy is a major health risk compared to taking birth control, says ACSH’s Dr. Gilbert Ross. So, do I believe birth control should be available over the counter? I say yes. But ACSH’s Dr. Elizabeth Whelan questioned whether there should be an age limit if this were approved, to which there was some debate.

We ask our readers what do you think? Let us know by leaving a comment on our website or emailing morning@acsh.org [2]