
Contraception - implants

Summary

- Hormonal contraception is available in several forms, one of which is the slow-release implant.
 - The contraceptive implant is the most effective reversible contraceptive method available. It is what is known as a 'long-acting reversible contraception', or LARC.
 - Different methods of contraception may suit you at different times in your life.
 - Condoms provide the best available protection from sexually transmissible infections (STIs).
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Hormonal contraception is available in several forms, one of which is the slow release implant, which slowly release hormones into the body over time. Other types of hormonal contraception include oral tablets (the combined pill and the mini pill), the hormonal IUD and the vaginal ring. Contraceptive implants are very effective if used the right way. When choosing the method of contraception that best suits you, it can help to talk to a doctor or nurse about your options.

What is the contraceptive implant?

The contraceptive implant (Implanon NXT®) is a soft plastic stick about four centimetres long. The implant slowly releases a hormone, progestogen, into your body. Progestogen is similar to the hormone produced by the ovaries.

How effective is the contraceptive implant?

The contraceptive implant is more than 99 per cent effective at preventing pregnancy and can last for up to three years.

How do I use the contraceptive implant?

The implant is inserted (injected) under the skin of your inner upper arm by a trained doctor or nurse. A local anaesthetic is used so that you will not feel pain when this is happening.

How does the contraceptive implant work?

The implant works by preventing the ovaries from releasing an egg each month. It also thickens the fluid around the cervix (the opening to the uterus or womb). This helps to prevent the sperm from entering.

When the implant is first inserted into the arm it can take up to seven days to start working to prevent pregnancy.

Where can I get the contraceptive implant?

Your doctor will write you a script and you can get the implant from your pharmacy. You will then need to return to the clinic to have the implant inserted. If you don't have a Medicare card it will be more expensive. It will be cheaper if you have a healthcare card.

What is good about the contraceptive implant?

Advantages of the contraceptive implant are:

- it is the most effective method of contraception
 - once inserted (put in) you can forget about it for three years
 - it can last up to three years
 - many users have no vaginal bleeding at all or very light bleeding
 - periods may be less painful
 - acne can improve
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- it is another choice if you have problems taking the hormone oestrogen. 'The pill' (also known as the combined pill) and the vaginal ring contain oestrogen and progestogen. The implant only contains progestogen
- you can use it while breast feeding
- it is easy to remove
- once removed your fertility quickly returns to normal.

Are there any side effects from using the contraceptive implant?

Once the contraceptive implant has been inserted your vaginal bleeding pattern (period) will change. It might be more often or irregular (at odd times). Around 20 per cent of women will have no bleeding at all (this is not harmful to the body). Frequent or prolonged bleeding may get better with time. Some medications can help with this bleeding, speak to your doctor or nurse.

Other possible side effects for a small number of users can include:

- headaches
- bloating
- changes to your skin
- sore or tender breasts
- mood changes.

These side effects often settle with time.

The implant has not been shown to cause weight gain.

Can the contraceptive implant cause any serious health problems?

Rarely, the implant is inserted too deep and you may need minor surgery to have it removed.

Is the contraceptive implant suitable for me?

The contraceptive implant might not be a good option if you:

- have been treated for breast cancer
- have severe liver disease
- take certain medications which may prevent the contraceptive implant from working. (Check with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist).

What stops the contraceptive implant from working?

The implant may not work if you:

- are taking some medications or natural remedies (check with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist)
- leave it in for more than three years. To prevent this from happening, it may help to write down the date when you had the implant put in, or enter a reminder in your phone for when you need to have it replaced.

What if I'm late having my contraceptive implant changed?

If the implant has been in for more than three years, use condoms until you can have it replaced.

What happens if I get pregnant while I'm using the contraceptive implant?

The implant is not known to harm a pregnancy. It is safe to continue the pregnancy (and remove the implant) or to have an abortion.

Can I use the contraceptive implant after I've had a baby?

The implant can be inserted straight after you give birth, even if you are breast feeding.

What if I'm using the contraceptive implant and I want to become pregnant?

The implant must be removed by a trained doctor or nurse. Your fertility will quickly return.

What else should I know about the contraceptive implant?

The contraceptive implant does not protect you from sexually transmissible infections (STIs). Condoms provide the best available protection from sexually transmissible infections (STIs).

The implant is one of many types of contraception. Read about other [contraceptive options](#).

Where to get help

- **1800 my options** (Tel. **1800 696 784**) can provide information on the phone about a range of private and public sexual and reproductive health clinics and services, including information about contraception
- Your **GP (doctor)**
- **Pharmacist**
- Many community health services and some public hospitals will have a family planning clinic, a sexual health clinic or a women's health clinic providing contraception
- **Family Planning Victoria** – comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services for people of all ages Tel. **1800 013 952** or **(03) 9257 0100**

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

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