

Contraceptive implant

A contraceptive implant is a small, flexible rod that's placed just under your skin in your upper arm. It releases a progestogen hormone, similar to the natural progesterone produced by the ovaries.

The implant's a method of long-acting reversible contraception (LARC). LARC is very effective because while it's being used you don't have to remember to take or use contraception.

Effectiveness

- It's over 99% effective at preventing pregnancy.
- Less than 1 implant user in 100 will get pregnant in one year.
- When the implant's used for 3 years, less than 1 implant user in every 1,000 will get pregnant over 3 years.

Who can use it?

- Most women can have an implant fitted.
- It may not be suitable if you've had certain illnesses, such as serious heart disease, stroke, liver disease or breast cancer.
- A doctor or nurse will ask about your own and your family's medical history.

After having a baby: You can have an implant put in any time after the birth. It can be used while you're breastfeeding and won't affect your milk supply.

How it works

- It stops ovulation (releasing an egg), thickens cervical mucus so it's difficult for sperm to reach an egg, and thins the lining of the uterus (womb) to help stop a fertilised egg implanting.

Advantages

- It works for 3 years but can be taken out sooner.
- You don't have to think about contraception for as long as the implant is in place.
- It may reduce heavy, painful periods.
- It can be used if you're breastfeeding.

Disadvantages

- Periods may change in a way that isn't acceptable to you.
- You may get temporary side effects at first, which could include headaches, breast tenderness and mood changes. These should stop within a few months.

- You may get acne, or acne may get worse.

Risks

- There's a risk of infection in your arm where the implant's inserted, but this is rare.

Periods and fertility

- Your periods will probably change.
- Most implant users will have irregular periods.
- In some implant users periods will stop completely.
- Some implant users will have periods that last longer.

When the implant is taken out, your periods and fertility will return to normal and it's possible to get pregnant before you have your first period.

Other things to know about the contraceptive implant

- It's put in using a local anaesthetic and no stitches are needed.
- Tenderness, bruising and some swelling may occur.
- You should be able to feel the implant with your fingers, but it can't be seen.
- Some medicines may stop the implant from working. Always mention you have an implant when being prescribed medication.

For lots more information about the implant go to www.sexwise.org.uk/implant

All methods of contraception come with a Patient Information Leaflet which provides detailed information about the method.

This is general information based on evidence-guided research from The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare and the World Health Organization.

Contact your doctor, practice nurse or a sexual health clinic if you're worried or unsure about anything.

General information

- Get information about contraception and sexual health at www.fpa.org.uk or www.sexwise.org.uk
- Get information for young people under 25 at www.brook.org.uk
- Find your closest contraception or sexual health clinic at www.fpa.org.uk/clinics
- Find a GP or pharmacy at www.nhs.uk (England), www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk (Wales), www.nhsinform.scot (Scotland) and www.hscni.net (Northern Ireland).

Emergency contraception

If you've had sex without contraception, or think your method might've failed, there are different types of emergency contraception you can use.

- An IUD is the most effective option. It can be fitted up to five days after sex, or up to five days after the earliest time you could've ovulated (released an egg).
- An emergency contraceptive pill with the active ingredient ulipristal acetate can be taken up to five days (120 hours) after sex. It's available with a prescription or to buy from a pharmacy. ellaOne is the only brand in the UK.
- An emergency contraceptive pill with the hormone levonorgestrel can be taken up to three days (72 hours) after sex. It's available with a prescription or to buy from a pharmacy. There are different brands.

Try and get emergency contraception as soon as possible after unprotected sex.

Emergency pills are available for free from some pharmacies. Age restrictions may apply

Sexually transmitted infections

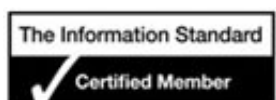
Most methods of contraception don't protect you from sexually transmitted infections.

Male (external) and female (internal) condoms, when used correctly and consistently, can help protect against sexually transmitted infections. If you can, avoid using spermicidally lubricated condoms. The spermicide commonly contains a chemical called Nonoxinol 9, which may increase the risk of HIV infection.

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Get more information about the contraceptive implant at www.sexwise.org.uk/implant

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