

factsheet

CONTRACEPTIVE IMPLANT

What is the contraceptive implant?

The contraceptive implant is a small, flexible rod about the size of a matchstick. The implant is inserted under the skin of the upper arm. The implant slowly releases a progestogen hormone called etonogestrel into the blood stream. This can prevent pregnancy for up to 3 years. Progestogen hormones are also used in the contraceptive pill and are like the natural hormone progesterone that is made by the ovary. The contraceptive implant available in Australia is called Implanon NXT.



How does the contraceptive implant work?

- it prevents the ovaries from releasing an egg each month (ovulation).
- It thickens the mucus in the cervix (the neck of the uterus) so that sperm cannot enter the uterus.

How well does the contraceptive implant work?

The contraceptive implant is 99.95% effective at preventing pregnancy. This means that if 1000 people use the contraceptive implant for a year, only one would become pregnant.

Who can use the contraceptive implant?

The contraceptive implant can be used safely by most people. It can be used by those who cannot use contraception that has the hormone estrogen in it.

You should not use the contraceptive implant if:

- you think you might be pregnant
- you have a history of breast cancer or severe liver disease - your doctor will need to talk to you about this so that you can decide if it is safe for you to use
- you have unexplained bleeding from your vagina - your doctor will need to talk to you about this before putting in the implant
- you take medicines which may stop the contraceptive implant from working properly including some epileptic medications and herbal remedies

It is important to talk to your doctor or nurse to see if the contraceptive implant is a good choice for you.

Advantages

- it is 99.95% effective
- it lasts for up to 3 years
- your fertility returns to normal as soon as it is taken out
- it is cost-effective
- some people have very light bleeding or no bleeding at all when the implant is in place
- it usually makes periods less painful it is safe to use when breastfeeding
- it can be used by most people who cannot use contraception that has oestrogen in it

Disadvantages

- it doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) - if you are at risk of STIs, you can use condoms at the same time as using the implant
- will change your normal monthly period - you may have:
 - no bleeding at all
 - light bleeding occasionally
 - light bleeding often
 - heavy bleeding occasionally
 - heavy bleeding often
 - talk to your doctor if you are unhappy with your bleeding pattern as they can recommend treatment to control the bleeding
- it needs a small procedure to put in and take out
- it can cause bruising on your arm when first put in



- some people can have hormonal side-effects including:
 - headache
 - nausea
 - breast tenderness
 - acne
 - mood changes
 - lowered interest in sex

These side effects don't happen to everyone. Talk to your doctor if you experience side effects that are bothering you

How is the contraceptive implant put in?

The implant is prescribed by a doctor.

The doctor or nurse will inject local anaesthetic under the skin on the inside of your upper arm to numb the skin. They will then insert the implant under the skin. The procedure takes 5-10 minutes.

If the implant is put in during the first 5 days of your period, it will start to work straight away. If it is put in at other times it will take 7 days to work - you will need to use another method of contraception or not have sex for 7 days.

How is the contraceptive implant taken out?

The implant can be left in the arm for up to 3 years. It can be taken out earlier if you want to get pregnant or if you don't want to use this type of contraception anymore. It should not be left in longer than 3 years.

The doctor or nurse will inject local anaesthetic under the tip of the implant to numb the skin. They will then remove the implant through a tiny cut in the skin. Once the implant is removed, your periods will go back to normal. If you do not want to get pregnant you need to use another method of contraception as soon as the implant is removed.

If you want another implant, a new one can be put in the same arm immediately after the old one is removed.

Where can I get a contraceptive implant?

The implant can be put in or taken out:

- at Family Planning Australia clinics
- by other healthcare workers, including GP's, nurses and gynaecologists, who have been specifically trained

For more information

- Visit your nearest Family Planning Australia clinic fpnsw.org.au/clinics
- Chat to a nurse via Talkline – 1300 658 886 or fpnsw.org.au/talkline
- National Relay Service (for people who are d/Deaf, hard of hearing or have speech communication difficulties) – 133 677
- Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) – 131 450
- Family Planning NSW client resource on contraception – What suits me? fpnsw.org.au/health-information/contraception/contraception-options