

What is a LARC?

Long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) are a group of contraception methods that:

- provide very effective contraception
- are long acting
- don't require you to do anything to prevent pregnancy every day or every time you have sex
- are immediately reversible when removed

LARC include intrauterine devices (IUDs) and contraceptive implants.

How do LARCs work?

Different LARC work in different ways.

Hormonal implants (Implanon®) last for 3 years and work by preventing eggs from being released from the ovaries (ovulation) and thickening the mucus in the cervix (the neck of the uterus) so that the sperm cannot enter the uterus.

Hormonal IUDs (Mirena® or Kyleena®) work by making the mucus in the cervix thicker so that sperm can't get into the uterus, and changing the lining of the uterus, making it less suitable for a pregnancy. They also sometimes stop the ovaries from releasing an egg. Mirena® IUD is now recommended for up to 8 years when used for contraception, and Kyleena® IUD for up to 5 years.

Both hormonal implants and IUDs contain progestogen hormones, which are like the natural hormone progesterone that is made by the ovary.

Copper IUDs last for up to 5 or up to 10 years (depending on the model) and work by being toxic to the egg and sperm (which stops sperm from fertilising the egg) and changing the lining of the uterus to make it unable to support a fertilised egg. Copper IUDs do not contain any hormones.

How well do the different LARCs work?

All LARCs are more than 99% effective and there is a rapid return to usual fertility as soon as a LARC is removed.

Who can use LARCs?

LARC can be used by most women, of any age, including those who:

- can't use contraception containing estrogen due to other health problems, or age over (50 years or older)
- experience side effects with estrogen such as nausea or breast tenderness
- have migraines
- smoke cigarettes
- have never had a baby
- are breastfeeding or have recently had a baby
- have recently had an abortion
- are overweight
- have diabetes
- have epilepsy
- are living with HIV
- have conditions which impact their ability to absorb oral (tablet) medications

How do I work out which LARC is right for me?

To decide which LARC is right for you, it is helpful to have accurate information on:

- its effectiveness in protecting you against pregnancy
- your individual health issues which may limit some choices
- side effects of LARCs, including changes to periods
- other benefits of LARCs in addition to contraception
- cost and availability

Your doctor or nurse should be able to provide you with all of this information. You can also find out more about each of the LARC in our other factsheets.

How do I get a LARC?

Before you start a LARC you will need an assessment to check your general health and suitability for LARC. All LARCs need to be inserted and removed by a specially trained doctor or nurse. You can get this done at a Family Planning Australia clinic, some GPs, public sexual health clinics, some women's health clinics, and gynaecologists.



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