

FACTSHEET: Contraceptive Implant



What is a contraceptive implant?

The contraceptive implant is a highly effective, long acting, and reversible contraceptive.

In Australia, the only available subdermal contraceptive implant is the Implanon NXT®. It contains a progestogen hormone called Etonogestrel which is steadily released to help prevent pregnancy for up to 3 years.

The implant is a flexible rod, around 4cm long, that is inserted under the skin on the inside of the arm.

How does it work?

The contraceptive implant is designed to:

- Stop a woman's ovaries from producing and releasing eggs each month (ovulating), and;
- thicken the mucus of a woman's cervix (entrance to the womb). This makes it hard for sperm to get through and fertilise an egg.

The implant contains Etonogestrel, a hormone that prevents ovulation. This hormone is released at a very low and consistent rate from the rod into the bloodstream to help prevent against pregnancy.

How effective is it?

The device has a 99.95% success rate in preventing pregnancy. It's important to remember that the implant – like most contraceptives – is a prevention device and is not 100% effective. Statistically speaking, 1 in 1000 women who use this form of contraception could still become pregnant.

How is it put in & removed?

The doctor or nurse will insert the implant using a specially designed device that ensures the implant is inserted at the right depth. The insertion procedure only takes a few minutes to complete.

Depending on what time in your cycle the implant was inserted, it may take 7 days to become effective for contraception.

Will it hurt?

Using an implant doesn't hurt, although there may be some bruising and tenderness after having it inserted or removed. This may last for up to a week. The area may also itch slightly for a few days.

It's important to avoid rubbing the skin over the implant.

Who can use the implant?

The implant can be used by most women, it has very few side effects and is useful for women who have medical conditions that prevent them from using oestrogen-based contraceptives. It can be used by breastfeeding mothers without interruption to milk supply and is safe to use in the postnatal period.

Women who may choose to use the contraceptive implant:

- Women who want long lasting, and reversible contraception.
- Woman willing to accept changes to their menstrual cycle. The implant may be especially suitable if you:
- Have difficulty remembering to take birth control pills.
- Don't like or prefer not to use other birth control methods.
- Cannot use oestrogen-based contraception.

Who may not be able to use it?

Woman who are already pregnant (or suspect they might be);

- Have pre-existing medical conditions such as liver disease or breast cancer;
- Have a history of blood clots;
- Cannot take the hormone progesterone;
- Take medication that could be effected by the implant or could make the implant less effective.

It's important to tell your doctor about any and all medications you take including over the counter supplements, anticonvulsants, or supplements like St John's Wort.

Is there anything else I should know?

Implants should be removed after three years, and at that time, another implant can be inserted if you would like to continue with the same form of contraception. It can also be taken out earlier. The implant is simple to remove, taking around ten minutes.

There are many reasons that you may want to have the implant removed. You may be wanting to get pregnant perhaps looking to try an alternative form of contraception.

Is there anything else I should know?

- "Fit & forget" - removes the need to remember to take or use something which can be particularly useful for busy or younger women.
- It's one of the most effective contraceptives having a 99.95% success rate.
- It's a 3 year device which can be cost effective.
- Can have a positive effect on the menstrual cycle with some women experiencing a reduction in period pain, menstrual flow or in some cases, absent periods.
- It's rapidly reversible with a quick return to fertility once removed.

What are the disadvantages?

- It does not protect against STIs. A condom should also be used to protect against sexually transmitted infections.
- As the implant releases very low dose of hormone, it doesn't have a strong effect on the endometrium (uterus lining). This means that around 20-25% of implant users will experience irregular, unpredictable nuisance bleeding with the device. This may or may not settle down over time.
- Some hormonal side effects are possible in a small proportion of users such as: acne, bloating, mood swings, appetite increase and headaches.

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More Information

If you have follow-up questions or a specific query that the information on this page did not cover, we encourage you to contact us. We can be reached via phone on 02 9411 3411 or via email at info@clinic66.com.au. Or, you can book an appointment at our Chatswood clinic between 8 am and 6 pm, Monday to Saturday.