

Patient information

Contraceptive implant – information for you

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. It works for three years.

How effective is the implant?

It is over 99% effective.

How does an implant work?

The main way it works is to stop your ovaries releasing an egg each month (ovulation). It also thickens the mucus from your cervix making it difficult for sperm to reach an egg.

What are the advantages of an implant?

- It works for three years
- It is suitable for use following childbirth
- You can use it if you're breast feeding
- Your fertility will return to normal as soon as the implant is taken out

What are the disadvantages of an implant?

- Your periods may change in a way that is not acceptable to you
- Many implant users notice that their periods are irregular. Some notice that they have more bleeding than usual; others notice that their periods stop completely.
- It requires a small procedure to put in and remove the implant
- An implant doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections

How is the implant put in?

The implant is inserted by a trained doctor or nurse. A local anaesthetic is used to numb the area on the inside of your upper arm.

The implant is then inserted under your skin – it only takes a few minutes to put in and feels like having an injection. You won't need any stitches after your implant has been fitted.

Are there any risks?

In rare cases the skin where the implant has been fitted can become infected. If this happens should contact your GP surgery. If there is an infection, you may need treatment with antibiotics.

Advice following insertion

Keeping the area clean and dry will minimise the risk of infection. You can remove the bandage after 24 hours. The steristrips and any adhesive dressing should be left undisturbed for a further three days.

How is an implant taken out?

Some (but not all) GPs or practice nurses are able to fit and remove implants, so you'll need to check at your GP surgery.

Alternatively, most sexual health clinics will be able to do this for you.

Where can I get further information?

The family planning association has information on contraception and sexual health on their website www.fpa.org.uk/

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust is actively involved in clinical research. Your doctor, clinical team or the research and development department may contact you regarding specific clinical research studies that you might be interested in participating in. If you do not wish to be contacted for these purposes, please email info.gov@wsh.nsh.uk. This will in no way affect the care or treatment you receive.

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