

Implantable Contraception (Nexplanon)

How does the implant work?

The birth control implant is a small, soft, thin rod with a core of a hormone called etonogestrel, a type of progesterone. It is placed under the skin of the upper arm in a minor surgical procedure. The progestin is released slowly and remains effective for 3 years. The hormone causes your ovaries to temporarily stop releasing eggs and cervical mucus to thicken which prevents sperm from getting from the vagina into the uterus.

How is the implantable contraception inserted and removed?

After reviewing your history and giving you a physical exam, your health care provider will numb a small area of your arm. The implant is inserted under the skin in a minor surgical procedure, and only takes a few minutes.

The implant can be removed at any time, but should be removed after 3 years. Your health care provider will numb the area and make one small incision to remove the implant. Removal usually takes a few minutes, but generally takes longer than the insertion. A new implant can be inserted at this time.

Problems related to insertion and removal are:

- Pain, irritation, swelling or bruising at the insertion site
- Scarring, including a thick scar called a keloid around the insertion site
- Infection of wound – signs would be increasing redness, pus, bleeding or pain related to insertion site
- Scar tissue may form around the implant making it difficult to remove
- The implant may come out by itself. You may become pregnant if the implant comes out by itself. Use a backup birth control method and call your healthcare provider right away if the implant comes out.
- The need for surgery in the hospital to remove the implant
- Injury to nerves or blood vessels in your arm
- The implant breaks making removal difficult

How effective is the implantable contraception?

This contraceptive is very effective. Less than 1 in 100 people using this method will become pregnant each year. If you are prescribed a new medication, always check with your provider to see if there are any concerns about the effectiveness of your implantable contraceptive

When am I protected from pregnancy?

If you get the implant on days 1-5 of your period, you are protected against pregnancy immediately. Otherwise you will need to use some form of back up birth control, like a condom, for the first 7 days after insertion.

What are the side effects?

- Irregular bleeding is the most common side effect, especially in the first 6-12 months. There is no way to tell what kind of bleeding pattern you will have until the implant is inserted.
- You will not know when you will have your period. You may have spotting between periods, or you may have shorter or longer periods.
- For most, periods become fewer and lighter. After one year, 1 in 3 persons who use the implant will stop having their periods completely. Less common side effects include change in sex drive, scarring of the skin over the implant, sore breasts and weight gain.
- Many people have concerns about the possible risks of taking hormones in birth control. Serious problems are rare. Call your doctor if you have any of the following signs or symptoms:
 - You have no period after having a period every month, or you have heavy or prolonged vaginal bleeding.
 - You have a new lump in your breast.
 - You have a severe headache or severe pain in your chest, abdomen or legs.

Advantages

- You do not have to think about birth control every time you have sex. Allows user to be spontaneous.
- The ability to become pregnant returns quickly when you stop using the implant.
- It can be used by people who cannot take estrogen
- It is safe to use while breastfeeding
- 88% of people who have painful periods will have less pain and cramping with the implant.

Disadvantages

- The implant will cause a change in your period. Some people have heavier and/or longer periods, and some have periods that are lighter and occur less often. Others stop getting their periods all together.
- The implant does not protect you from sexually transmitted infections.
- It must be inserted and removed by a health care practitioner in a minor surgical procedure.
- You may have pain or a tiny scar at the insertion site.

Have questions?

Appointment Line: 831-459-2500
Nurse Advice Line: 831-459-2591
SHS Main Phone: 831-459-2211
Pharmacy: 831-459-2360

Implantable contraception does not protect you against sexually transmitted infections. You must still use a condom, practice safer sex and get regular STI testing to reduce your risk of an STI and identify problems early.