

# FACTS ABOUT BIRTH CONTROL IMPLANTS

## What is an implant?

Birth control implants are small devices containing a medicine that prevents a woman's ovaries from releasing eggs, so she can't get pregnant. Implanon is one brand of implant. It is a half-inch long plastic rod, about the size of a small straw, inserted under a woman's skin. Inside the plastic rod is the hormone progestin.

## How does an implant work?

Progestin is a man-made hormone similar to the progesterone naturally produced in a woman's ovaries. The progestin in the implant is released slowly into the woman's body over three years. It prevents the woman from having a baby because the progestin prevents the ovaries from releasing eggs. It also thickens the cervical mucus, preventing sperm from joining with an egg. At the end of the three years, it will stop working, so a doctor or nurse will need to take out the implant and replace it with a new one, if needed.

## How well does the implant work?

Tests show that Implanon, for example, prevents pregnancy about 99 percent of the time. This means it works about as well as having your tubes tied, but it is not permanent.



## Why is an implant a good choice for me?

Once an implant such as Implanon is put in, there is nothing to remember. Implanon works all the time for three years. If you want to have a baby before the three years are over, a doctor or nurse can take the implant out so your ovaries can start releasing eggs again.

## Are there any reasons why I couldn't use an implant?

Discuss the implant with your doctor if:

1. You think you are pregnant.
2. You have ever had blood clots.
3. You have ever had breast cancer or other sorts of cancer.
4. You have bleeding from your vagina and you don't know why.
5. You have disturbed liver function.
6. You have heart problems such as high blood pressure or disease or have had a heart attack or diabetes.
7. You have had previous problems with the use of local anesthetic, sex hormones or plastics.
8. You have allergies or are taking any medications.

## How is an implant put in and taken out?

The implant is inserted under the skin, usually in the inside portion of the upper arm, a few inches below the armpit, although other insertion sites may be chosen instead. Local anesthetic is injected to the area of the skin where the implant is inserted. Insertion

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only takes a few minutes. After insertion, you should be able to feel but not see the implant. If you can't feel the bump where the implant is supposed to be anytime after insertion, see your doctor and use a backup method of birth control until your doctor or nurse tells you the implant is still in place.

Removing the implant requires a small cut at the insertion site. It also is done under local anesthetic and may leave a small scar after it heals.

## What are the side effects?

While approximately half of women will continue to have regular periods after insertion of an implant, the most common side effect is irregular period patterns:

- Periods may cease altogether;
- Periods may come at your normal time but be lighter and less painful;
- You may experience intermittent bleeding between periods; or
- You may have heavier, longer or more painful periods.

Other side effects are rare, but users sensitive to the hormone in the rod may experience acne, headaches, moodiness, weight gain and/or breast tenderness. These symptoms usually improve over time. There is also the possibility of an allergic reaction to the implant.

To help prevent possible problems, try to stop smoking if you smoke. Right now it is not known if implants increase the harmful effects of cigarette smoking. To help you to be healthy, it is best that you do not smoke while using an implant.

## Where can I get an implant?

Some health departments and private doctors' offices provide implants such as Implanon.

## Can I breastfeed my baby if I have an implant?

Yes. Talk to your doctor about how many weeks to wait after you have your baby before you can have an implant put in.

### REMEMBER

An implant will not keep you from getting HIV/AIDS or any other disease you can get when you have sex. To help protect yourself, use a latex or polyurethane condom each time you have sex.



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