

IMPLANON®

Contraceptive Implant

The contraceptive implant is a small rod that is placed under the skin and releases the hormone progestogen into the blood stream. The brand name is Implanon®



QUICK FACTS

Common name:

The rod, the bar.

Medical names:

Contraceptive Implant, Implanon® (brand).

Effectiveness:

99.9%.

Effectiveness duration:

3 years.

Fertility:

Ovulation returns when the implant is removed.

Who can use it?

Suitable for most people from menarche (start of periods) up to the age of 55.

Hormones:

Contains progestogen hormone.

Visibility:

Moderately discreet, it can be felt by touching the insertion site on the arm.

STI's:

No protection.

Bleeding pattern:

Amenorrhoea (no periods) or irregular bleeding, which may be light or heavy.

Cost:

Cost depends on your individual situation. Available on the PBS (under \$40).

How to get it:

Book an appointment at a True clinic or with your GP

IMPLANON® DOES NOT PROTECT AGAINST STI's. TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE PROTECTED AGAINST PREGNANCY AND STI's, USE IMPLANON® PLUS A CONDOM FOR EVERY SEXUAL ENCOUNTER.

How does Implanon® work?

Implanon® works as a contraceptive by:

- preventing ovulation (egg release from the ovary)
- thickening of the mucus of the cervix so that sperm cannot enter the uterus (womb).

What are the advantages of Implanon® as a method of contraception?

- Highly effective (99.9%), this means that fewer than 1 person in every 100 using this method of contraception for a year would become pregnant
- Long-acting (lasts 3 years)
- Reversible and rapid return to usual fertility (most people ovulate within the first month after removal of the implant)
- Inexpensive – cost effective
- Can cause amenorrhoea (no vaginal bleeding) or improve bleeding patterns in some users
- No pills and no regular injections
- Possible reduced risk of cancer of the uterus and ovaries

What happens to periods when using Implanon®?

A change to the pattern of vaginal bleeding is the most noticeable result of using the implant. The changes are due to the effect of the hormone on the lining of the uterus (endometrium) and through ovulation suppression. It is not possible to predict what the pattern will be for any individual.

Changes can include:

- bleeding frequency (approximately 1 in every 5 women have no bleeding at all)
- infrequent bleeding
- prolonged and/or frequent bleeding.

Other possible side effects of Implanon®

- Headaches
- Mood changes
- Weight gain
- Breast tenderness
- Loss of sexual interest
- New onset or worsening of acne
- Abdominal pain or cramping

Does Implanon® suit everyone?

Most people can safely use Implanon®. Your doctor will review the suitability of the method with you prior to insertion.

Who cannot use Implanon®?

Implanon® is not suitable for people:

- with current or past breast cancer
- with unexplained vaginal bleeding (your doctor will need to investigate this prior to the insertion of the implant)
- using certain medications which may prevent the contraceptive implant from working effectively
- with severe liver conditions such as cirrhosis
- who experience stroke or a cardiovascular event whilst using the method.



Other disadvantages or possible risks of Implanon®

- It does not protect against sexually transmissible infections (STIs).
- The current or recent use of Implanon slightly increases the risk of breast cancer but the absolute risk remains small.

The implant requires a minor procedure for insertion and removal.

- Bruising is common for 1-2 weeks after the procedure.
- There will be a small scar on the arm.
- Sometimes, it is tricky to remove the implant.
- Very rarely, the device can migrate.

How is the implant inserted and removed?

A local anaesthetic is given into the skin. The implant is inserted through a small incision in the skin – usually on the inside of the upper non-dominant arm.

If it is inserted in the first 5 days of the menstrual period, it will be immediately effective. If it is inserted at other times in the cycle, it will not start working for 7 days. It is standard practice to perform a urine pregnancy test on the day of insertion. If there is a chance of an early pregnancy, it is still safe to have the device inserted, but you need to do a pregnancy test 3 weeks later.

The implant can be left in the arm for 3 years (or removed earlier if desired). Removal is a simple procedure using a small amount of local anaesthetic.

Fertility after an implant

When the implant is removed, menstrual cycles and fertility return rapidly.

If you do not wish to fall pregnant, you must consider alternate methods of contraception straight away.

The implant is not effective after 3 years so it should be removed and the same or another contraceptive method used. A single procedure can be used to remove an old implant and put in a new one.

When to seek care

Women should reattend as advised by the treating clinician, otherwise women should attend if:

- they experience troublesome side effects
- the implant can no longer be felt
- the implant has significantly moved or changed shape.

What can be done about irregular bleeding?

Irregular bleeding may settle after 3-4 months of using Implanon®. Sexual health screening is recommended, if relevant.

If problematic bleeding continues, options include:

- non-hormonal medications to reduce bleeding e.g. non-steroidal anti-inflammatories
- hormonal medications to reduce bleeding e.g. addition of the combined oral contraceptive pill
- removal of the implant and changing to another form of contraception.