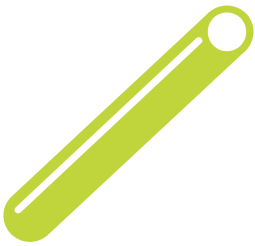


contraceptive implant



THE CONTRACEPTIVE IMPLANT

The contraceptive implant is a small flexible plastic tube which is placed just under your skin. It slowly releases a progestogen hormone and gives contraceptive protection for 3 years.

The implant is usually inserted in the inner part of the upper arm and while it can be felt under the skin it cannot be seen. There is only one implant available in Ireland at this time – it is called Implanon.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Implanon acts by preventing ovulation. The implant also thickens the mucus at the neck of the womb making it difficult for sperm to enter.

HOW EFFECTIVE IS IT?

The implant is an extremely effective method of contraception. The pregnancy rate associated with the use of Implanon is very low. Fewer than 1 in 1000 women using it over 3 years will fall pregnant. However some prescribed medicines may make an implant less effective so always inform your doctor if you are being prescribed medicines.

WHERE DO YOU GET THE IMPLANT?

An implant must be put in by a doctor who has been trained to fit implants or at a family planning clinic. This method of contraception is available on the GMS (Medical Card Scheme).

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES?

- » Does not interrupt sex.
- » It works within one week of being fitted.
- » Lasts for three years with no pills, patches or injections etc to remember.
- » It offers some protection against pelvic inflammatory disease.
- » It may give you some protection against cancer of the womb.
- » It may reduce heavy, painful periods.
- » You can breastfeed if you have an implant.
- » There is no evidence of a delay in the return of fertility following removal.
- » There is no evidence that Implanon use is associated with weight, mood, libido (sex drive) or headaches.
- » If you have no medical problems you can continue to use the implant until you reach the menopause. Each implant will need to be changed every three years.

WHAT ARE THE DISADVANTAGES?

- » Needs to be inserted and removed by a specially trained doctor.
- » Your periods will probably change. In the first year of use, most women have irregular bleeding. After the first year most women will have regular periods but some will still have heavy and prolonged bleeding. A few will not bleed at all. These changes are not harmful.
- » May be associated with acne
- » Removal may leave a small scar.
- » Although research has not shown that implants cause depression or mood changes, some women may experience these symptoms.
- » No protection against sexually transmitted infections, so you may also need to use a condom.

WHO IS IT SUITABLE FOR?

Not everyone can have an implant and your doctor or nurse will need to ask you about your own and your family's medical history. Some conditions which may mean you should not have an implant are:

- » You think you might already be pregnant.
- » You do not want your periods to change.
- » A number of past or present medical conditions may also mean that an implant would not be your first choice of contraceptive.

HOW IS AN IMPLANT PUT IN?

You will get a local anaesthetic to numb the part of your arm where the implant will go, so it doesn't hurt to have it put in. It is similar to having an injection. You won't need any stitches.

The area may be tender for a day or two and may be bruised or slightly swollen. The doctor or nurse will put a dressing on it to keep it clean and dry, this should be left on for a few days.

You may have a check-up three to six months after the implant is put in. If you have any problems, particularly pain, swelling or redness at the implant site, heavy or persistent bleeding or migraine, you should contact your nurse or doctor.

HOW IS AN IMPLANT TAKEN OUT?

It usually only takes a few minutes to remove an implant. If the implant has been put in correctly, it should not be difficult to remove. The doctor or nurse will feel for the implant under the skin, make a tiny cut and gently pull the implant out.

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Occasionally, an implant is difficult to feel under the skin and it may not be so easy to remove. If this happens, you may be referred to a specialist centre to have it removed with the help of an ultrasound scan.

WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND?

You don't have to keep an implant in for three years. If you decide you want to stop using it, see your doctor and ask to have it removed. You will stop being protected against getting pregnant immediately after the implant is removed. An implant is designed to be used for three years and is not a short-term method of contraception. If you are not sure you want contraceptive protection for this long, other methods of contraception may be more suitable for you.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS?

Very rarely, soon after the implant is put in it can cause an infection in your arm, where it has been inserted.

Research about the risk of breast cancer and hormonal contraception is complex and contradictory. Current research suggests that women who use hormonal contraception appear to have a small increase in risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer compared to women who don't use hormonal contraception. Further research is ongoing.

WHAT ABOUT ANTIBIOTICS?

The implant is not affected by the use of common antibiotics, but is affected by enzyme inducing medication such as HIV treatments or epilepsy medication. As with any medicines, tell your doctor if you are using hormonal contraception. The complementary medicine St John's Wort may also make the contraceptive less effective.

PREGNANCY AND THE IMPLANT

IF I BECOME PREGNANT

The implant is a highly effective method of contraception; it is unlikely that you are pregnant. If you do get pregnant while you are using the implant, there is no evidence that it will harm the baby.

AFTER CHILDBIRTH

You can have an implant put in 3 weeks (21 days) after you have given birth. If the implant is put in on or before day 21 you will be protected from pregnancy immediately. If the implant is put in later than day 21 you will need to use an extra method of contraception for 7 days. An implant can be used safely while you are breastfeeding and will not affect your milk supply.

AFTER AN ABORTION

The implant can be put in immediately after a miscarriage or abortion. You will be protected against pregnancy immediately.

NOTES:

TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT AT AN IFPA MEDICAL CENTRE OR FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR SERVICES PLEASE CALL:

IFPA, 5-7 Cathal Brugha Street, Dublin 1
T: +353 (1) 872 7088

IFPA, The Square, Tallaght, Dublin
T: +353 (1) 459 7685

THE IFPA ALSO OPERATES A NATIONAL INFORMATION SERVICE PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES AND DETAILS OF STI AND CONTRACEPTIVE SERVICES IN YOUR AREA.

T: +353 (1) 8069444
E: post@ifpa.ie

DON'T FORGET – THIS LEAFLET CAN ONLY OUTLINE BASIC INFORMATION ON CONTRACEPTIVE IMPLANT. INFORMATION IS BASED ON EVIDENCE AND MEDICAL OPINION AT THE TIME OF PUBLICATION HOWEVER YOU MAY COME ACROSS CONFLICTING ADVICE ON CERTAIN POINTS. RING OR VISIT YOUR DOCTOR IF YOU ARE WORRIED OR UNSURE ABOUT ANYTHING.