



FACT SHEET

Contraceptive Implant (Implanon®) - Your Questions Answered

Implanon® has been inserted into my left / right arm.

My next Implanon® check-up is on the:

abortion

contraception

STI check ups

vasectomy

What is a contraceptive implant?

Known as Implanon® in Australia, the contraceptive implant is a thin, white, plastic rod (4cm x 2mm) containing the hormone etonogestrel (a type of synthetic progesterone). The implant is inserted, under local anaesthetic, under the skin of the inner upper arm by a doctor. The procedure only takes a few minutes at most.

How does it work?

The contraceptive implant prevents pregnancy by releasing small but constant amounts of progesterone into the body via the bloodstream. Specifically, this prevents ovulation (eggs being released from the ovaries), sperm from reaching an egg or an egg implanting into the uterus.

Will it work immediately?

If the implant is inserted within the first five days of the menstrual cycle (where day one is the first day of your period), then it is effective immediately. If, however, insertion is at another time during your menstrual cycle, another form of contraception (such as condoms) should be used for the next seven days to avoid unplanned pregnancy. Your doctor will discuss with you the best time to have the Implanon® inserted, as he/she firstly needs to ensure you are not pregnant.

How long will it last?

Implants are a good method for women who want a long term, convenient contraceptive, as each implant lasts **up to three years** (although the implant can be removed at any time). The implant **must** be removed and/or replaced after three years: not only will it **not** protect against pregnancy, leaving it in place after this time may increase the risk of ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy outside the uterus).

Your doctor will give you a card which records the date that your Implanon® must be removed/swapped. Ultimately it is your responsibility to make an appointment to visit your doctor.

How effective is it?

Implanon® is 99.9% effective (that is, if 1000 women used it for a year, only one of them might become pregnant). It is more reliable than the contraceptive pill as there is no need for you to remember to take your contraceptive every day. No contraceptive is 100% effective.

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What are the side effects?

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

- Periods may cease altogether.
- Periods may come at the normal time but are lighter and less painful.
- Intermittent bleeding in between periods.
- Heavy, longer or more painful periods (you may choose to remove the implant if this persists).

Unusual bleeding should settle down within three months.

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 the possibility of allergic reaction to the implant.

If you are at all concerned about any symptoms you think may be caused by Implanon®, contact your Marie Stopes International centre on **Freecall 1800 303 707** or your doctor.

Who should not use Implanon®?

Those with certain medical conditions should not use Implanon®. Before using the contraceptive implant, you need to inform your doctor if you:

- May be pregnant
- Have had a history of any unusual bleeding or spotting from the vagina (including irregular or no bleeding)
- Have had cancer of the reproductive system (breast, ovary or uterus)
- Have disturbed liver function
- Have heart problems such as high blood pressure or disease, or have had heart attacks or diabetes
- Have had previous problems using local anaesthetic, sex hormones or plastics in the past
- Have allergies or are taking any medications.

Your Marie Stopes International doctor will talk with you about Implanon® and help you decide whether it is the best contraceptive method for you.

What if I want to stop using Implanon®? Is it reversible?

Implanon® is easily removed and quickly reversible. To stop using the implant, it needs to be removed by your doctor. Most women return to a normal menstrual cycle and fertility within a month of the device being removed. You need to use another form of contraception as soon as the device is removed if you do not want to get pregnant.

What else should I consider?

- There may be some minor scarring after the insertion or removal of the implant. Some women are predisposed to develop a thicker scar. A larger scar is likely if the implant is difficult to remove.
- Implants offer no protection against STIs and HIV/AIDS.

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- If you are not keen on injections or the idea of something being placed under your skin for up to three years, or if you are concerned by irregular period patterns, you should reconsider this as a form of contraception.
- On rare occasions, Implanon® may move from its original position. This may complicate removal.

What if I am breastfeeding?

Please consult your doctor for advice about hormonal contraception such as Implanon® if you are breastfeeding.

How is Implanon® inserted?

The insertion of Implanon® is a minor surgical procedure requiring the use of local anaesthetic. It needs to be inserted by a fully trained doctor, such as your Marie Stopes International doctor.

Your doctor will firstly discuss and assess the suitability of the implant for you (including the advantages and disadvantages of the device). Following the initial consultation and your consent to insert the contraceptive, the doctor will inject a small amount of local anaesthetic under the skin on the inside of your non-dominant upper arm. When the anaesthetic has taken effect, the doctor will insert the contraceptive implant just under the skin arm in your arm using a sterile disposable applicator. Your doctor will then apply a dressing which should be left in place for 24 hours. This process should only take a minute.

You should ensure your doctor shows you how to gently feel for the implant following insertion. This is important so it can be easily located at the time of removal. Be careful not to manipulate the rod so that it doesn't move from its position. *If you cannot feel the implant at any time you should inform your doctor immediately and use a back up method of contraception until the presence of the rod can be confirmed.*

Some bruising, soreness or discomfort around the implant may occur which can last up to a week following the insertion. Some itchiness over the implant may also occur, and should pass within two weeks. Avoid scratching the skin.

How is the device removed?

The removal of Implanon® is a minor surgical procedure requiring the use of local anaesthetic and needs to be done by a fully trained doctor.

Implanon® is removed with a local anaesthetic injection to the area just underneath the end of the implant. A tiny incision is then made in the skin and the end of the implant is pushed through this small incision or assisted out with a small instrument and removed. A dressing is then applied and should be left in place for 24 hours. The removal of the implant should take about three minutes. Although the implant rarely moves, if it has moved from its original position it could make removal more difficult.

Can I get a new one inserted when I remove the old one?

It is possible to have a new Implanon® inserted at the same time the other one is removed.

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Where can I get it from?

A doctor's prescription is required to obtain Implanon®. You can get this from either a Marie Stopes International centre, a trained GP or a family planning centre.

How much does it cost?

Implanon® is available to those with a current Medicare card from Marie Stopes International for approximately \$30. With a valid Centrelink card (health care or pension card) the cost is reduced.

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**DON'T FORGET YOUR REGULAR BREAST CHECKS
AND BE SURE TO HAVE A PAP SMEAR EVERY TWO YEARS**

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