

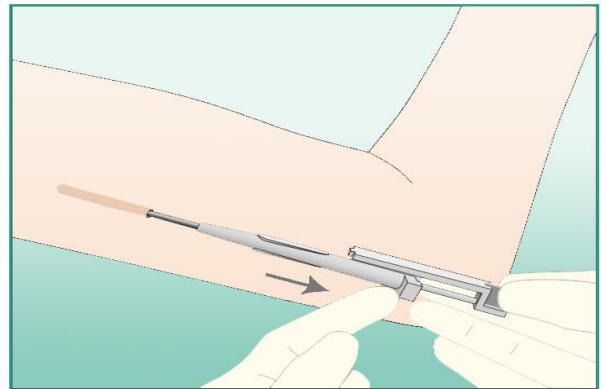


Drug FAQs for Members

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Birth Control Implant

The birth control implant (Implanon™) provides a long-acting birth control option for women. It is a flexible plastic rod, about the size of a matchstick, which is placed under the skin on the inner side of your upper arm. The implant releases a small amount of a progestin hormone called etonogestrel every day. It does not contain estrogen hormones. The implant can be used as birth control for up to three years after it is placed.



How does the birth control implant work?

The birth control implant prevents pregnancy in a few ways. It stops the release of an egg from your ovary (ovulation) and changes the mucus in your cervix to keep sperm from reaching the egg. It also changes the lining of the uterus (where a fertilized egg would implant and grow).

How well does the birth control implant work?

- The birth control implant is over 99 percent effective. This means that less than one pregnancy occurs per 100 women who use the implant for one year. It is not known if the implant is as effective in women who are very overweight because the studies did not include such women.
- Each implant can be used for up to three years, and then it will need to be replaced with a new implant, or another form of birth control, if you wish to continue taking birth control.

What are the most common side effects of the birth control implant?

- The most common side effect of the birth control implant is a change in your menstrual bleeding pattern. Your bleeding pattern may not be regular or predictable throughout the time you are using the implant. You may bleed more than usual, less than usual, or have no bleeding at all.
- Other side effects that caused women to stop using the implant in studies include: mood swings, weight gain, headache, acne, and depression. These side effects are not common with the birth control implant.

What are the advantages of the birth control implant?

- **Convenience:** It works without you needing to do anything daily or when you have sex.
- **Effectiveness:** The implant is more than 99 percent effective.
- **Reversible:** The implant can be easily removed if a pregnancy is desired. After removal of the implant, your ability to get pregnant returns quickly. Some women have become pregnant as soon as the first week after removal.



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What are some things to think about when choosing to use the birth control implant?

- The birth control implant does not protect against infection from HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) or other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Some women may have problems with the placement or removal of the implant such as pain, swelling, bruising, scarring or infection at the site of insertion.
- Like other hormone-based methods of birth control, the birth control implant may put you at risk for blood clots, especially if you smoke.
- Use of the progestin-only birth control implant is not linked to bone loss since it does not cause major changes in your body's natural estrogen levels. This is different than the progestin-only birth control injection (Depo-Provera[®]) which does lower estrogen levels and may cause women to lose calcium stored in their bones.
- Women who are breastfeeding may use the birth control implant as soon as four weeks after having a baby.

Which women can use the birth control implant?

You may be a good candidate for the implant if you:

- Want a long-acting birth control method that requires little effort and is easily reversed.
- Recently had a baby or are breastfeeding.
- Are willing to accept changes in menstrual bleeding patterns.
- Are not regularly taking other medicines that may interact with the hormone in the implant.
- Are not very overweight.

Who should NOT use a birth control implant?

The birth control implant should not be used if you:

- Have or have had a serious blood clot (such as in the legs, lungs or eyes), a heart attack or a stroke.
- Have unexplained vaginal bleeding.
- Have liver disease.
- Have or have had breast cancer.
- Are pregnant or may be pregnant.

How do I get a birth control implant?

- The implant can be inserted by a doctor (or other trained healthcare provider) during an office visit. The timing of insertion is important. Depending on your history, you may also need to take a pregnancy test, you may need to schedule the insertion during a specific time of your cycle, or you may need to use a back-up birth control method for seven days after the implant is placed in your arm.
- You will also need an office visit with your doctor (or other trained healthcare provider) to remove the implant. The implant should be removed no later than three years after it is inserted.

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