fact sheet

The Contraceptive Implant

What is the contraceptive implant?

The contraceptive implant, often called 'the rod,' is a small flexible plastic rod that contains a progestogen hormone called etonogestrel. It is inserted under the skin on the underside of your upper arm, where it slowly releases a small amount of this hormone over 5 years. The contraceptive implant used in Australia is called Implanon NXT.

How does it work?

The contraceptive implant prevents pregnancy by stopping eggs from being released from the ovary (ovulation). It also increases the thickness of mucus in the cervix, making it hard for sperm to travel through and fertilise an egg.

How long does it last?

The contraceptive implant is effective for 5 years, but you can have it removed earlier if you wish.

How effective is it?

The contraceptive implant is a very effective contraceptive method and is 99.95% effective at preventing pregnancy.

Who can use the contraceptive implant?

The contraceptive implant is suitable for most people to use. Your doctor will be able to help you decide if it is right for you. There are situations when it is not suitable. These include the following:

- If you might already be pregnant
- If you have had breast cancer or cancer of your reproductive organs
- If you have severe liver disease
- If you have abnormal vaginal bleeding and the cause is not known
- If you are taking certain medications which may interfere with the action of the implant



Advantages of the contraceptive implant

- It gives you five years of highly effective contraception with no need to do anything daily
- It gives you contraceptive cover straight away if you have it inserted in the first 5 days of your menstrual cycle
- It can be removed if side effects are not acceptable or if you wish to become pregnant
- Your fertility returns to normal quickly after removal
- It is a good option for people who cannot or do not want to use oestrogen
- It can be used when breastfeeding
- SHPACT is a LARC Centre of Excellence. This means that there are no out of pocket costs when you see the doctor for your initial contraception appointment, or for your Implanon insertion/removal appointment. You will have to purchase your Implanon from a pharmacy and this is subsidised under the PBS

Disadvantages of the contraceptive implant

The disadvantages of the contraceptive implant are:

- It requires a minor procedure to insert and remove it
- It does not protect against sexually transmissible infections
- Changes to your menstrual bleeding are common

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What are the possible side effects?

The most common side effect of the contraceptive implant is changes to your menstrual bleeding. These changes can include:

- No bleeding
- Infrequent spotting or bleeding
- Occasional light bleeding
- Prolonged or frequent spotting or bleeding
- Heavy bleeding

If you have side effects that you are unhappy with, discuss this with your doctor.

Other possible side effects include:

- Headache
- Breast discomfort
- Acne may develop or worsen, although some women may find that their acne improves
- Local reactions at the site of the insertion (see possible risks)
- Some people report weight changes or mood changes
- Progestogen hormones can be associated with cysts on the ovary, but these types of cysts usually disappear spontaneously and rarely cause symptoms or need treatment

What are the possible risks of insertion?

Possible risks of insertion are unusual. They include:

- Bruising, soreness, infection
- Possible scarring at the site of the insertion
- Possible difficulty removing the implant
- Allergy to the anaesthetic or to the implant itself



Where can I get the contraceptive implant?

The contraceptive implant is available through family planning clinics, including SHFPACT, as well as through GPs and gynaecologists.



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To book a Contraception Consultation, scan the QR code to visit our HotDoc page, and follow the booking prompts.

To find out about SHFPACT's Clinicial Services, please visit shfpact.org.au, or scan the QR code

References/Acknowledgments:
Contraception: An Australian clinical practice handbook 4th Edition
Contraceptive Implant Fact sheet/ Family Planning Australia
Faculty of Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists UK. https://www.fsrh.org/h

SHFPACT is a health promotion charity (HPC) assisted with funding from the ACT Government. All donations to SHFPACT over $2.00 are tax deductible.

Supported by ACT Government

Nov 2026

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