

What is a contraceptive implant?

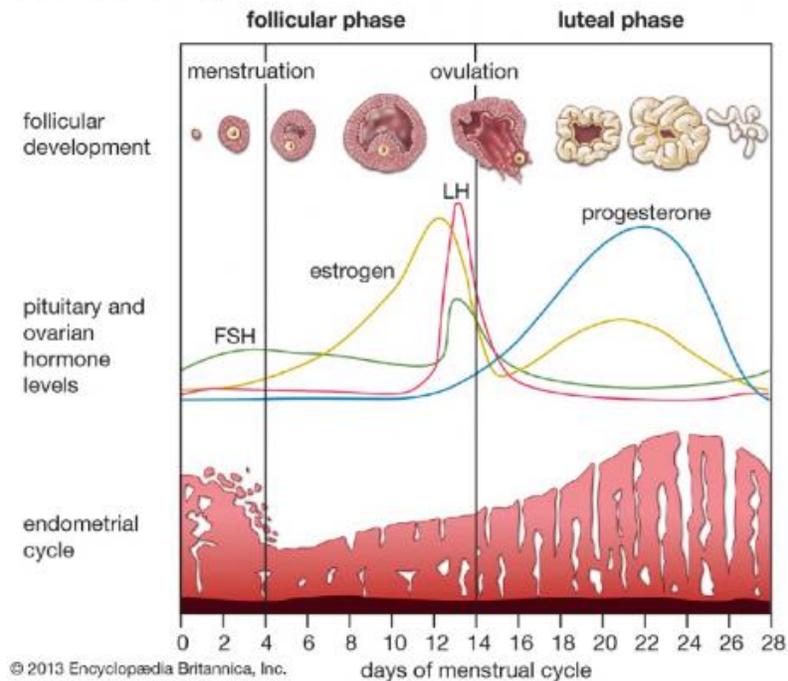
It is a small rod inserted under the skin of your arm.
It releases a hormone, etonogestrel.



How does it work?

The hormone prevents ovulation (when the egg is released from the ovary).
This is the same way that birth control pills, patches, rings and shots work.

The menstrual cycle



Dr. Derek Rajakumar
#59683

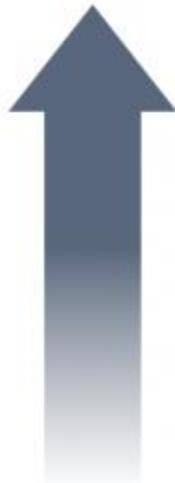
Dr. Kathryn MacKinlay
#82910

How well does the implant work compared to other contraceptives?

If 1000 people use it for one year, we expect 1 to get pregnant.
It is similar to surgical sterilization in effectiveness.

WHO model of tiered contraceptive effectiveness

More effective



Less effective



How do implants compare to the pill?

Most birth control pills (as well as the patches and rings) have a combination of estrogen and progesterone. Some people can't use birth control with estrogen because they have conditions that can increase their risk of blood clots and some because they have side effects. The implant is similar to the progesterone-only pill in the amount of hormone (and therefore the associated side effects). However, the implant is more effective and much more convenient.

Dr. Derek Rajakumar
#59683

Dr. Kathryn MacKinlay
#82910

How do implants compare to IUDs?

Copper IUDs have no hormone and periods get heavier and crampier. The hormonal IUDs have less hormone than the implant, so have fewer hormonal side effects. IUDs work by changing the lining of the uterus but do not change the natural hormone cycle or ovulation, while implants prevent ovulation. The implant is inserted into your arm through your skin, while the IUD is inserted into your uterus through your vagina, which can be more uncomfortable for some patients.

Comparing different hormonal contraceptives

Contraceptive Implants	Hormonal IUDs	Combination hormonal contraception
Plastic rod inserted under the skin of your arm	Plastic T-shaped device inserted into your uterus	Pill (swallow), patch (on skin) or ring (in vagina)
Lasts 3 years	Lasts 5 years	Use every day (pill), every week (patch), every month (ring)
Very effective 99.9%	Very effective 99.9%	Effective 92% (typical use)
Progesterone only	Progesterone only	Progesterone and estrogen
Hormone side effects: mood swings, weight gain, acne, decreased sex drive (total about 25%)	Hormone side effects: mood swings, weight gain, acne, decreased sex drive (total about 10%)	Hormone side effects: mood swings, weight gain, acne, decreased sex drive, nausea, headaches (total about 40%)
Bleeding: irregular spotting and bleeding, about 50% of people lose their periods.	Bleeding: irregular spotting and bleeding, about 70% of people lose their periods	Regular periods unless taken without breaks

All these contraceptives are much safer than getting pregnant!

What is it like to get an implant inserted?

The doctor will inject a small amount of local anesthetic (freezing) in your skin of the inside of your upper arm before inserting the rod. You will feel the needle only. There may be some bruising after.

What is it like to get an implant removed?

The doctor will inject a small amount of local anesthetic (freezing) around the rod before removing it.