

The Implant (Nexplanon)

What is the implant?

The implant is a type of birth control that is a small “matchstick” shaped rod which slowly releases the progestin hormone. The implant is placed just under the skin of the upper arm and can stay in place for up to 3 years.

The implant works by:

- stopping the release of an egg (ovulation),
- thickening the cervical fluid to keep sperm from reaching the egg, and
- changing the lining of the uterus.



How effective is the implant?

- The implant is one of the most effective forms of birth control available and is over 99% effective .
- Some medications including herbal supplements can interfere with hormonal birth control. Talk to your healthcare provider.

The implant is over 99% effective and can stay in place for up to 3 years.

Advantages

- Lighter periods or no periods at all
- Can be used by people who cannot take estrogen
- Safe to use when breastfeeding
- Fertility is quickly restored once the implant is removed
- Does not require ongoing medical appointments
- Is discreet and well-hidden (although some people may be able to feel it under the skin)
- Lowers the risk of uterine and ovarian cancer

Disadvantages

- A small scar where the implant is inserted/removed
- Must be inserted/removed by a health care provider
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections
- Unpredictable bleeding is common especially during the first year of use, but often improves over time
- Some users may experience mild side effects

Side effects

Some people have side effects from the implant which usually go away a few weeks after starting the medication:

- Headaches
- Sore breasts
- Irregular bleeding
- Mood changes & irritability
- Possible weight gain
- Acne
- Bloating

If you experience side effects and they bother you, go to a clinic or pharmacy to discuss ways to manage them.

WARNING

Reasons to get urgent medical help:

- Heavy continuous bleeding
- Frequent or very bad headaches
- Severe leg pain
- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Sudden change in seeing or speaking clearly
- Yellowing of your skin or whites of your eyes
- Severe pain, swelling, or any signs of infection where the implant was placed
- If the implant is not fully under your skin (poking out from where it was inserted)
- If you can't feel the implant

Birth control is free for BC residents with MSP. For more information, check out the BC Pharmacare website.

Where can you get the implant?

- The implant is available only by prescription and is free if you have MSP.
- Sexual health clinics, pharmacies or your health care provider can provide a prescription for you.
- A trained health care provider can insert the implant; the health care provider who inserted the implant can also do the removal.

How to use the implant

- You can have the implant inserted at any time in your menstrual cycle.
- If you are not currently on birth control you will need to use a back-up method (i.e. condoms) for 7 days after the implant is placed.
- The implant can stay in place for up to 3 years and can be removed at any time by a health care provider.

The implant is effective in preventing pregnancy after 7 days of the implant insertion. **Use condoms as back-up for the first seven days of use.**

Pregnancy may occur if birth control is not used properly.

- Consider Emergency Contraception if you have sex within the first 7 days of having the implant placed and DID NOT use a condom.
- The Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP) can be taken as soon as possible after unprotected sex (within 5 days, but the sooner the better).
- An IUD can also be used as an option of Emergency Contraception up to 7 days after unprotected sex with an effectiveness of 99%.
- Call a sexual health clinic, pharmacy, or 1-800-SEX-SENSE for more information.

The implant DOES NOT protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

*STI testing is recommended every 6-12 months and/or when you have a new partner(s).
STI testing is available at a sexual health clinic or with your health care provider.*

Questions?

If you have questions about your birth control, call your health care provider, sexual health clinic, pharmacy, or 1-800-SEX-SENSE.

Find the clinic closest to you:

<https://www.vch.ca/en/service/sexual-health-clinics>

www.optionsforsexualhealth.org



This fact sheet contains general information and should not be used in place of individual consultation with a qualified healthcare provider.