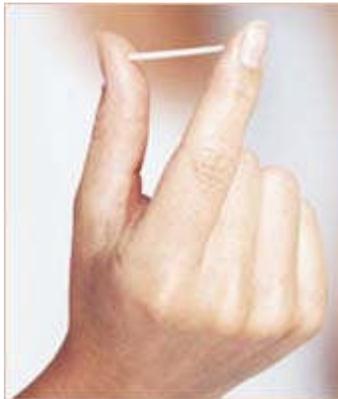


## **WHAT IS A CONTRACEPTIVE IMPLANT?**

An implant is a small flexible rod that is placed just under the skin in your upper arm. It releases a progestogen hormone similar to the natural progesterone that women produce in their ovaries. It is a very effective, long term, hormonal method of contraception which protects you from pregnancy for up to three years. The implant that is available in the UK and Ireland is called Implanon.

## **WHAT IS A CONTRACEPTIVE IMPLANT?**

An implant is a small flexible rod that is placed just under the skin in your upper arm. It releases a progestogen hormone similar to the natural progesterone that women produce in their ovaries. It is a very effective, long term, hormonal method of contraception which protects you from pregnancy for up to three years. The implant that is available in the UK and Ireland is called Implanon.



## **HOW EFFECTIVE IS IT?**

If you follow the instructions, Implanon is 99% effective.

## **HOW DOES THE IMPLANT WORK?**

The main way it works is to stop the ovaries from producing an egg every month (ovulation). It also thickens the mucus from your cervix which makes it difficult for sperm to move through your cervix and reach an egg. It makes the lining of your womb thinner so that it is less likely to accept a fertilised egg.

## **CAN ANYONE USE AN IMPLANT?**

Most women who want to use an implant can have one fitted. After your own and your families medical history are taken your doctor or nurse will help to decide if the implant is suitable for you. You should tell them about any illness or operations that you have had.

Implant may not be suitable if:

- you think that you may already be pregnant.
- you do not want your periods to change.
- you take certain medicines.
- if you now have, or had in the past, breast cancer.
- if you have or had unexplained vaginal bleeding eg bleeding between periods or after sex.
- thrombosis (blood clots in any vein).
- heart attack or stroke (severe arterial disease).
- active liver disease.

## **HOW LONG IS THE IMPLANT EFFECTIVE?**

If is effective for three years.

## **WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF AN IMPLANT?**

- You don't have to think about contraception for as long as the implant lasts ie. "fit and forget" advantage.
- It doesn't interrupt sex
- You can use it if you are breast feeding
- It is a good method if you cannot use oestrogen (hormones like those in the combined pill)
- Your normal level of fertility will return as soon as the implant is taken out
- It offers some protection against pelvic inflammatory disease
- It may give you some protection against cancer of the womb
- It may reduce heavy, painful periods

## **WHAT ARE THE DISADVANTAGES OF IMPLANT?**

- Your periods may change in a way that is not acceptable to you
- Other possible effects include headaches, spotty skin, putting on weight, tender breasts, bloating, changes in sex drive. These usually pass after a short while
- It requires a small procedure to fit and remove
- Implant does not protect you against sexually transmitted infection so you may need to use some condoms as well

Research about the risk of breast cancer and hormonal contraception is complex and contradictory. Currently research suggests that women who use hormonal contraception appear to have a small increases in risk of breast cancer compared to those who didn't use hormonal contraceptives. Further research is ongoing.

## **HOW IS THE IMPLANT PUT IN?**

The implant, which is the size of a hair grip, is placed just under your skin in the inner area of your upper arm. It is put in by a trained doctor or nurse. Local anaesthetic is given to numb the part of the arm where the implant will go, but it won't hurt. It takes a few minutes to put in and feels similar to having an injection. You won't need any stitches. After the implant is fitted the doctor or nurse will check to see that the implant is in place. The area may be tender for a few days, may be bruised and slightly swollen. Once the area is healed the implant should not move or break or anything like that.

## **HOW IS IT TAKEN OUT?**

The implant can be left in for 3 years but can be taken out sooner if you decide that you want to stop using it. Most extractions are quite forward although a scalpel has to be used to remove it.

## **CAN ANYTHING MAKE IT LESS EFFECTIVE?**

Yes, some medicines may make it less effective especially those used to treat HIV, epilepsy, TB. The complimentary medicine St John's Wort can also effect it . It is not usually affected by common anti-biotics, diarrhoea or vomiting.

## **WILL IT AFFECT PERIODS?**

Your periods will probably change. Some women's periods stop completely, some will have irregular periods or spotting (bleeding between periods), some women will have periods that may last longer and are heavier. These changes may be a nuisance but are not harmful and if they are prolonged it is possible to give a temporary additional hormone to help control the bleeding.