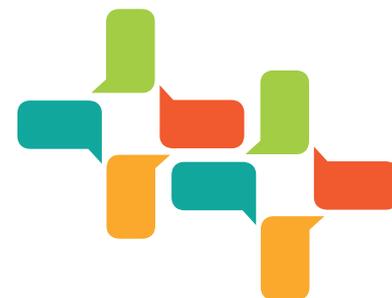


Fact Sheet

The contraceptive implant (Implanon NXT®)

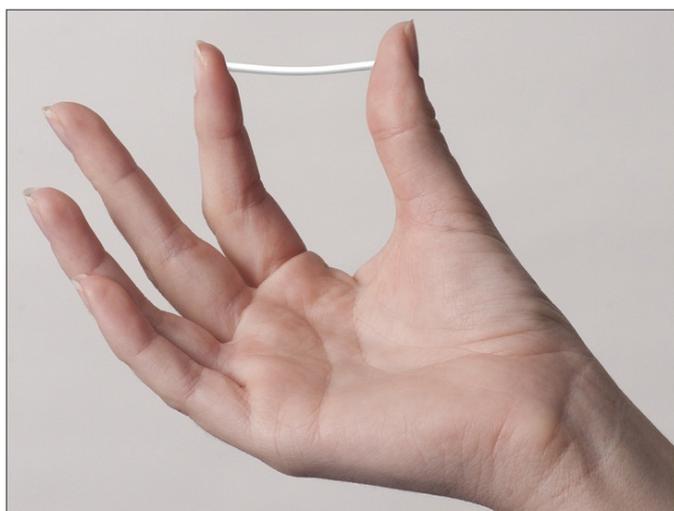


Implanon NXT® is the brand name for the progestogen contraceptive implant available in Australia.

What is it?

The implant is a small, flexible rod which is inserted under the skin of the inner upper arm. It slowly releases a progestogen hormone to prevent pregnancy for up to three years.

Progestogen is one of the hormones used in the combined oral contraceptive pill (the Pill) and is similar to the natural hormone progesterone which is made by the body.



How does it work?

The implant works by:

- preventing ovulation (release of the egg from the ovary)
- thickening the cervical mucus so that the sperm cannot enter the uterus (womb)

How effective is it?

It is a very effective method of preventing a pregnancy (more than 99.9% effective). This means that fewer than one woman in every hundred using this method of contraception for a year would become pregnant.

Some medications however can reduce the effectiveness of the implant; therefore it is important to inform your doctor or nurse if you are taking other medications.

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What are the advantages of the implant?

- It is highly effective
- It lasts a long time (up to three years)
- It is reversible and the return to fertility is rapid
- It does not require women to remember to take a pill
- Women do not need to have regular injections
- It is a cost-effective method of contraception
- Some women have no vaginal bleeding at all or very light bleeding
- It may reduce painful periods, premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and acne in some women

What are the disadvantages of the implant?

The most common side-effect with the implant is a change to the pattern of vaginal bleeding.

Changes can include:

- changes in bleeding frequency (about one in every five women have no bleeding at all)
- irregular light bleeding
- prolonged and/or frequent light bleeding
- prolonged and/or frequent heavy bleeding

Women who are unhappy with their bleeding pattern should talk to their doctor.

Other disadvantages:

- It does not protect against sexually transmissible infections (STIs)
- It requires a minor procedure for insertion and removal
- Some women experience skin bruising when it is first put in the arm

What other side effects can occur?

Possible side effects include:

- headaches
- mood changes
- breast tenderness
- new onset acne

What are the POSSIBLE risks associated with the contraceptive implant?

The risks associated with insertion and removal can include:

- bruising or pain at the site of insertion for one to two weeks
- a small scar (some women may develop a thickened scar)
- allergic reactions to the local anaesthetic or the implant materials
- infection at the insertion/removal site
- difficulty removing the implant

Who can use the contraceptive implant?

Your doctor will take a medical history to see if you are suitable for the implant.

Most women who require effective, convenient, long acting reversible contraception can safely use the implant.

It is safe to use while breast-feeding.

Certain conditions may NOT allow the use of the implant. These include:

- a history of breast cancer
- unexplained vaginal bleeding (your doctor will need to investigate this prior to the insertion of the implant)
- certain medications which may prevent the contraceptive implant from working effectively

How is the contraceptive implant inserted and removed?

This involves a small procedure by a doctor who has been specifically trained in insertion and removal of the implant.

Local anaesthetic is applied to the skin to make the insertion more comfortable.

The implant is normally inserted during the first five days of the menstrual period but it can be inserted at other times if there is no chance that the woman could already be pregnant.

If it is inserted in the first five days of the menstrual period it will be immediately effective.

If it is inserted at other times it will not be effective for seven days.

The implant can be left in the arm for three years (or removed earlier if desired). Removal is a simple procedure using a small amount of local anaesthetic.

After removal

The contraceptive effect wears off very quickly when the implant is removed with most women returning to their previous menstrual cycle within a month. If you do not wish to fall pregnant, you must consider alternate methods of contraception straight away.

It is very important to have the implant removed three years after it was inserted because it will no longer provide effective contraception.

Where is the contraceptive implant available?

The implant is prescribed by a doctor and can be inserted at Family Planning clinics and by GPs and gynaecologists who have been trained in this procedure.

For more information

- Contact the Family Planning NSW Talkline on 1300 658 886 or go to www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline
- NRS (for deaf) 133 677
- Visit your nearest Family Planning clinic

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