

What is a LARC?

Long acting reversible contraception (LARC) are a group of contraception methods that:

- provide very effective contraception
- are long acting
- don't require you to do anything to prevent pregnancy every day or every time you have sex
- are immediately reversible when removed

LARC include intrauterine devices (IUDs) and contraceptive implants.

How do LARCs work?

Different LARC work in different ways.

Hormonal implants (Implanon[®]) last for 3 years and work by preventing eggs from being released from the ovaries (ovulation) and thickening the mucus in the cervix (the neck of the uterus) so that the sperm cannot enter the uterus.

Hormonal IUDs (Mirena[®] or Kyleena[®]) last for 5 years and work by being toxic to the egg and sperm (which stops sperm from fertilising the egg), making the mucus in the cervix thicker so that sperm can't get into the uterus, and changing the lining of the uterus, making it less suitable for a pregnancy. They also sometimes stop the ovaries from releasing an egg.

Copper IUDs last for 5 or 10 years (depending on the model) and work by being toxic to the egg and sperm (which stops sperm from fertilising the egg), slowing the transport of the egg to delay chance of sperm and egg meeting, and changing the lining of the uterus to make it unable to support a fertilised egg.

How well do the different LARCs work?

LARC are all more than 99% effective and there is a rapid return to usual fertility as soon as LARC are removed.

Who can use LARCs?

LARC can be used by most women, of any age, including those who:

- can't use contraception containing oestrogen due to other health problems
- experience side effects with oestrogen such as nausea or breast tenderness
- have migraines
- smoke cigarettes
- have never had a baby
- are breastfeeding or have recently had a baby
- have recently had an abortion

- are overweight
- have diabetes
- have epilepsy
- are living with HIV
- have inflammatory bowel disease

How do I work out which LARC is right for me?

To decide which LARC is right for you, it is helpful to have accurate information on:

- effectiveness in pregnancy prevention
- health issues which may limit some choices
- side effects including changes to periods
- benefits other than contraception
- cost and availability
- reversibility

Your doctor or nurse should be able to provide you with all of this information. You can also find out more about each of the LARC in our other factsheets.

How do I get a LARC?

Before you start a LARC you will need an assessment by your doctor or nurse to check your general health and suitability for LARC. All LARCs need to be inserted and removed by a specially trained doctor or nurse. You can get this done at a Family Planning clinic, gynaecologist, some women's health clinics, and some GPs.

For more information

Family Planning NSW Talkline –

www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline or 1300 658 886

National Relay Service (for people who are deaf or hearing impaired) – 13 36 77

TIS National's interpreting service – 131 450

Visit your nearest Family Planning NSW clinic –

www.fpnsw.org.au/clinics

Family Planning NSW client resource on contraception – [What suits me?](#)

Family Planning NSW video – [What's a LARC?](#)