

# THE CONTRACEPTIVE IMPLANT (IMPLANON NXT)



Care  
Education  
Advocacy

## What is the contraceptive implant (Implanon NXT)?

The contraceptive implant is a flexible plastic stick, 4 cm long. The implant slowly releases a hormone, progestogen, into your body. Progestogen is similar to the hormone produced by the ovaries. The implant is sold as Implanon NXT in Australia.

## How effective is the implant?

The implant is more than 99% effective at preventing pregnancy and can last for up to 3 years.

## How does the implant work?

The implant works by preventing the ovaries from releasing an egg each month. It also thickens the fluid around the cervix (opening to the uterus/womb). This helps to prevent sperm from entering.

## How do I use the implant?

The implant is inserted (injected) under the skin of your inner upper arm by a trained doctor or nurse. A local anaesthetic is used before the implant is inserted so that you will not feel pain when this is happening. After the implant is inserted, you should be able to feel the implant under the skin.

Removing the implant is also done by a trained doctor or nurse. A local anaesthetic is used and then a small cut made in your skin to remove the implant.

## When does it start to be effective?

When the implant is first inserted into the arm, it can take up to 7 days to start working to prevent pregnancy. This depends on the timing of your menstrual cycle and if you are already using contraception. Speak with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for more information.

## Where can I get the implant?

Your doctor or nurse will provide a script which you can take to the pharmacy, who will sell you the implant. You will need to return to the clinic to have the implant inserted. If you do not have a Medicare card it will be more expensive. It will be cheaper if you have a healthcare card.

## What stops the implant from working?

The implant may not work if you:

- you are taking some medications or natural remedies (check with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist)
- leave it in more than 3 years.

## What is good about the implant?

- It is the most effective method of contraception.
- It can last up to 3 years.
- Once inserted (put in) you can forget about it for 3 years.
- Many users have no vaginal bleeding (period) at all or light bleeding.
- Periods may be less painful.
- Acne can improve.
- You can use it while breast feeding.
- It can be taken out at any time by a specially trained doctor or nurse.
- Once removed your fertility quickly returns to what is normal for you.
- It is another contraceptive option if you have difficulty taking the hormone oestrogen. The Pill (combined pill or oral contraceptive pill) and vaginal ring (NuvaRing) contain oestrogen and progestogen. The implant only contains progestogen.

## Are there any side effects from using the implant?

When the implant is first inserted and when it is removed, you may have some bruising and tenderness on your arm. This may last for up to a week. Wearing a bandage over your arm for 24 hours helps reduce bruising and tenderness. You may also develop a small scar where the implant was inserted and removed.

Your vaginal bleeding pattern (period) will change. It might be more often and/or irregular (at different times). Around 20% of people using the implant will have no bleeding at all (this is not harmful to the body). Around 20% of people have frequent or prolonged bleeding which may get better with time. Some medications can help with this bleeding, speak to your doctor or nurse for more information.

Possible side effects for a small number of users can include:

- headaches
- changes to your skin
- sore/ tender breasts
- mood changes.

These side effects often settle with time. The implant has not been shown to cause weight gain.

## Can the implant cause any serious health problems?

Rarely the implant is inserted too deep and you may need a surgical procedure to have it removed.

## Reasons why the implant might not be a good option for you:

- Have breast cancer or have been treated for breast cancer.
- Severe liver disease.
- Take certain medications which may prevent the contraceptive implant from working (check with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist).



### **What if I late having my implant changed or it has expired?**

If you do not want to become pregnant and the implant has been in for more than 3 years, you can abstain from sex or use condoms until you can have it replaced. If you have unprotected sex and your implant has been in for more than 3 years, you might need emergency contraception.

### **Can I use the implant after I have had a baby?**

The implant can be inserted straight after you give birth, even if you are breast feeding.

### **What if I am using the implant and I want to become pregnant?**

The implant can be removed by a trained doctor or nurse. Your fertility will quickly return to what is normal for you.

### **What else should I know about the implant?**

- The implant does not protect you from sexually transmissible infections (STIs).
- It is good to record the date or enter a reminder into your phone for when your implant is due to be removed. You will need to have it taken out before it expires (up to 3 years after being inserted). You can have a new implant inserted at the same time the existing one is being removed.

