

IMPLANON

Implanon, also called 'the bar' or 'the rod', is a form of contraception. A small rod made out of soft plastic is inserted into the upper arm to prevent pregnancy, and lasts for three years. The rod contains the hormone Etonogestrel, which is similar to the naturally occurring hormone progesterone. Implanon belongs to a group of contraception options called Long Acting Reversible Contraceptions or LARCs (link) which are the most effective forms of contraception, are easy to maintain, and are completely reversible. Implanon do not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or blood-borne viruses (BBVs). Practice safer sex by using condoms to reduce the risk of STIs and BBVs.

WHAT IS IT?

Implanon is a 4cm long contraceptive device made out of soft plastic. It is inserted under the skin into the upper arm to prevent pregnancy.

Implanon is impregnated with the hormone Etonogestrel. This is a synthetic version of the hormone progesterone that women make naturally. This hormone is slowly released from the bar into the bloodstream.

Implanon is the most effective method of contraception available and is effective for three years.

You can get Implanon inserted if you are having sex and do not want to get pregnant at the moment.

There are many advantages to choosing Implanon, including:

- Implanon is 99.9% effective in preventing pregnancy.
- Implanon lasts for three years.
- Once an Implanon has been inserted, you do not need to remember to do anything every day (like you do if you are on the pill).
- An Implanon can be taken out at any time by a specially trained doctor or nurse.
- Your chance of getting pregnant will go back to normal very soon after Implanon has been taken out.
- Implanon may make bleeding on your period lighter or less painful, or your periods may stop completely (this is completely safe).
- Implanon is affected by very few medications.
- Implanon is not affected by infections like gastro.
- Implanon may help control acne.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Implanon stops the body from releasing an egg (ovum) each month, and will work without you needing to remember to do anything. Implanon also makes the fluid at the opening to the uterus thicker, stopping sperm from getting through.

There are a very small number of medications that can stop Implanon from working properly, and your doctor or nurse will be able to advise you on this in detail. Please note that Implanons are not affected by infections like gastro.

IS IT RIGHT FOR ME?

Most women can get an Implanon, and it is a very popular form of Long Acting Reversible Contraception. However, you should always discuss your suitability for contraceptive options with your health provider.

You may not be eligible for an Implanon if you:

- Are currently pregnant.
- Have breast cancer.
- Have severe liver disease or are using medications that affect the liver.
- Have undiagnosed abnormal vaginal bleeding.
- Taking certain medicines that your doctor will advise you about.

Implanon can be inserted at any time that we can be sure you are not pregnant, and it will take 7 days to start working as a contraceptive.

As it takes approximately four weeks from conception for a urine pregnancy test to give an accurate result, it may not always be possible to know if you are pregnant at the time Implanon is inserted.

In this case, Implanon can safely be inserted and it will still take 7 days to start working as a contraceptive. You will then need to have a pregnancy test 4 weeks following the insertion to check that you weren't already pregnant at the time of insertion.

If you are pregnant, you can then choose to either continue with the pregnancy and have the Implanon removed or not continue with the unplanned pregnancy.

It is safe to have an Implanon inserted as soon as you've had a baby, and it is also safe to breastfeed if you have Implanon.



HOW CAN I GET IT?

You can get Implanon inserted at Family Planning Tasmania clinics, some GPs, private gynaecologists, and at the public hospital.

Implanon costs only \$37.00 on a prescription if you have a Medicare card, and for clients with a Health Care Card it is \$6.00.

For clients who do not have a Medicare card, the prescription for the medication will be more expensive.

WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE FOR HAVING IT INSERTED?

Implanon requires a small procedure to be fitted/inserted. This procedure is carried out by a trained professional in a clinical environment.

To get Implanon inserted at Family Planning Tasmania you will usually need to attend two appointments (occasionally a third appointment is required). At the first appointment we explain the procedure to you, check if Implanon will be suitable for you and organise a script.

At the second appointment Implanon is inserted. This involves:

- A local anaesthetic being given to numb the skin.
- Implanon being inserted using a special applicator, with no stitches required.
- A pressure bandage being applied to reduce the chance of bruising.

Never attempt to remove an Implanon yourself. Removal should only be undertaken by a health professional who will remove it by applying a local anaesthetic and making a small cut in the skin, with no stitches required.

It is important to consider future contraceptive needs before you have your Implanon removed, as its contraceptive effects will cease immediately upon removal and your fertility will return to what it was before you got your Implanon. You can discuss your options with a health professional.



WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

While Implanon may occasionally cause minor health problems, Implanon rarely causes any serious health problems.

All women will experience a change in their bleeding pattern when they first get Implanon, this often settles within the first three to four months. 20% women will stop having periods completely while they have Implanon. This is completely safe.

After 3-4 months the bleeding will generally settle into a pattern that will continue for the duration that you use that Implanon. The following bleeding patterns occur:

- 20% of women will have persistent bleeding or spotting which lasts beyond the initial 3 month settling in period.
- 60% of women find their periods stay about the same or get a bit lighter. If you do experience persistent or irregular bleeding,

If you do experience persistent or irregular bleeding there is medication that can assist with these symptoms.

Occasionally some women may also experience acne, breast tenderness, moodiness, increased appetite and headaches. Bruising and mild soreness at the site of insertion or removal can also last up to 2 weeks and a small scar will remain.

If Implanon does not work and you get pregnant, there is no evidence that Implanon will have a negative effect on the pregnancy if you wish to continue with it.

Please also remember that Implanon does not give protection from Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) or Blood Borne Viruses (BBVs). Using condoms will reduce these risks.

It is also very important to have Implanon removed after three years as leaving it in place longer than this may increase the risk of an ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy in the fallopian tube), and it will not be effective as a contraceptive. It is possible to have another Implanon inserted at the same time one is removed.

Family Planning Tasmania has clinics in Glenorchy, Launceston, and Burnie.

Our doctors and nurses can assist you with information about Implanon's, or provide support with Emergency Contraception. Alternatively, you can talk to your regular GP.

For more information on Implanon's, or to learn how to make an appointment go to www.fpt.asn.au

