Birth Control Implant

The birth control implant is a small, flexible device about the size of a match stick. It is placed in a woman’s inner, upper arm by a health care provider. The implant releases hormones that can stop an egg from being released from your ovary and stop sperm from reaching the egg. It is a very effective form of birth control and can be removed anytime by a health care provider. The brand name is Nexplanon (etonogestrel implant), and it lasts up to 3 years.

Pros and cons of using this type of birth control

Pros
- The implant is more than 99% effective, meaning there is less than 1 pregnancy a year for every 100 women using the IUD.
- Once it is placed, you do not need to do anything else to prevent pregnancy, such as taking a pill every day or interrupting sex for birth control.
- It can be removed if you wish to become pregnant. It will not make it harder to get pregnant later.
- It may make your periods light, or it may stop your period. This is normal and does not need to be treated.
- You can use this form of birth control if you are breastfeeding.

Cons
- The most common side effect is irregular bleeding or spotting.
- You may have pain, numbness, tingling, or infection where the implant was placed.
- The implant does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. The only way to protect against STIs is by using a condom every time you have intercourse.
- Some other common side effects include:
  - Breast tenderness
  - Depression
  - Mood swings
  - Mild headache
  - Dizziness
  - Acne
  - Weight gain
  - Painful periods
  - Nausea
Risks

- **Ectopic pregnancy**
  Because the implant is so effective, women using them have very low rates of any kind of pregnancy. If you become pregnant while using this method of birth control, however, you have a slightly higher chance of having the fertilized egg implant outside of the uterus (ectopic). If you think you are pregnant, contact your health care provider right away to rule out this dangerous condition.

- **Ovarian cysts**
  Some women develop a cyst on their ovary. These cysts normally disappear on their own within 1 to 2 months.

**How the implant is placed**

- The implant can be placed during a visit to your health care provider’s office.
- The site where the implant is inserted will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution. A medicine will be injected to numb the site.
- Using a special device, the implant is inserted under the skin in your inner arm.
- A Band-Aid is placed over the insertion site. You will keep the Band-Aid on for one week, but you can change it as needed.
- You and your health care provider should check to make sure it is in your arm by feeling for it.
- A wrap will be placed around your upper arm. Keep the wrap on for 24 hours.
- Use condoms for one week after the implant is placed to prevent pregnancy.

**Contact your health care provider if you have:**

- Redness, swelling, bleeding, or pain in your arm where the device was inserted
- Heavier or longer periods
- Think the implant has moved or broken
- Yellowing of the skin or the whites of your eyes appear yellow
- Abdominal pain

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or e-mail health-info@osu.edu.