

WHAT ARE CONTRACEPTIVE IMPLANTS?

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The contraceptive implant (Implanon) is a single implant inserted into the upper arm. After a woman is given a local anesthetic, insertion takes only a few minutes. Usually it does not hurt. Implants give off very small amounts of a hormone much like the progesterone a woman's body produces during the last two weeks of each monthly cycle. Among typical couples who initiate use of implants, five women in 1,000 will experience an accidental pregnancy in the first year. Complete information about this contraceptive is available through a clinician or the package insert accompanying the implant.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF CONTRACEPTIVE IMPLANTS?

- Implants are very effective and they last a long time. In a recent study, no pregnancies occurred among the first 70,000 cycles of Implanon users. That's great protection!
- There is nothing to do on a daily basis or at the time of intercourse.
- Women lose less blood during menstruation. They also have less cramping, headaches, and breast tenderness.
- Depression and premenstrual symptoms may improve.

WHAT ARE THE DISADVANTAGES?

- Implants do not protect from HIV/AIDS or other STIs. Use a condom, if you or your partner may be at risk.
- Implants are quite likely to cause irregular periods in some women. If bothersome to you, contact your clinician. There are drugs that a woman may take to have a more acceptable pattern of bleeding. As time goes on a woman's periods may become more regular.
- You may gain weight, lose hair, develop headaches or note darkening of the skin over your implants. Implants may cause some arm discomfort.
- Depression and premenstrual symptoms may become worse.
- A woman may have trouble finding a clinician who will remove her implants.

WHERE DO I GO TO GET IMPLANTS?

A woman can get implants from a doctor, nurse practitioner, nurse midwife, health department, or family planning clinic. Not all clinicians insert implants. It is a good idea to check on this in advance. Be sure the clinician is also experienced at removing implants and will remove them regardless of ability to pay to have them removed.

WHAT IS THE ROUTINE AFTER A WOMAN HAS IMPLANTS INSERTED?

A woman will probably be given a date to return about one month after insertion to check out the insertion site and to answer any questions she may have. After this, return to your clinician just once a year for your regular checkup.

Adapted from Hatcher RA *et al. Contraceptive Technology*. 18th rev. edition. New York, NY: Ardent Media, 2004.

