

## The Implant (Nexplanon)

### What is it?

The implant is a type of birth control that is a small “matchstick” shaped rod. It contains and slowly releases the progestin hormone, and is placed just under the skin of the upper arm. It can stay in place for up to 3 years.



### How does it work?

The implant slowly releases the hormone, progestin, which stops your ovaries from ovulating (releasing an egg) each month. It thickens the mucous of the cervix, which makes it harder for sperm to get into the uterus. The implant also thins the lining of the uterus, which makes it difficult for an egg to implant.

### Is it safe and will it work?

- Yes, it is safe for most people.
- The implant is one of the most effective forms of birth control available.

### What is the cost?

- The implant is free with a prescription if you have MSP.
- For those without MSP, some private insurance may provide some cost coverage.
- Youth clinics provide the implant for free to people without MSP.

### How to use the implant

You can have the implant inserted at any time in your menstrual cycle. If you are not currently on birth control you will need to use a back-up method (i.e. condoms) for 7 days after the implant is placed.

If you have sex and do not use birth control you can become pregnant. If this happens, you can take an Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP) to avoid getting pregnant.

- If you have sex within the first 7 days of having the implant placed and DID NOT use a condom, take ECP.
- Take ECP as soon as you can after unprotected sex (within 5 days, but the sooner the better).
- You can get ECP for free at youth clinics and community health centres. You can also get ECP from pharmacies for free (no prescription needed) and at some walk-in clinics.

## Advantages

- The implant works well and is easy to use.
- Most people have fewer, lighter periods, and some people have no periods at all.
- Fertility is quickly restored once the implant is removed.
- Can be used by people who cannot use birth control that has estrogen.
- Safe to use when breastfeeding.
- The implant does not require ongoing medical appointments.
- Is discreet and well-hidden (although some people may be able to feel it under the skin).
- Lowers the risk of uterine and ovarian cancer.

## Disadvantages

- A small scar where the implant is inserted/removed.
- The implant does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.
- Unpredictable bleeding is common especially during the first year of use, but often improves over time. You can also experience irregular or unscheduled periods or spotting.

## Side effects

Some people have side effects from the implant, such as:

- Headaches
- Breast tenderness
- Mood changes & irritability
- Irregular bleeding
- Possible weight gain
- Acne
- Bloating

If you get side effects and they bother you, go back to the clinic to discuss ways to manage them.

## WARNING

### Reasons to get urgent medical help:

- Heavy continuous bleeding
- Severe, persistent leg pain
- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Sudden change in seeing or speaking
- Severe, persistent headache
- Yellowing of your skin or whites of your eyes
- Severe pain, swelling, or any signs of infection where the implant was placed
- Symptoms of an allergic reaction (swollen face, tongue, hives, difficulty breathing, etc.)
- If the implant is not fully under your skin (poking out from where it was inserted)
- If you can't feel the implant



### Find the clinic closest to you:

<https://www.vch.ca/en/service/sexual-health-clinics>

[www.vch.ca/en/service/youth-clinics](http://www.vch.ca/en/service/youth-clinics)

[www.optionsforsexualhealth.org](http://www.optionsforsexualhealth.org)