

# Birth Control Implant

**Notes:**

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This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:  
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

*Prepared by:* ROSE Clinic, QE II  
*Designed by:* Nova Scotia Health Library Services

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# Birth Control Implant

## What is a birth control implant?

A birth control implant is a plastic rod. It is 4 cm long and 2 mm wide.

## Where does the implant go?

- The implant goes under your skin on the inside of your upper arm between your armpit and your elbow.
- The implant is put in by a health care provider using local anesthetic (medication to numb an area of your body). This will help you to feel less pain.
- It is usually put in the arm you use the least.
- The rod can be seen with an X-ray or ultrasound.

## How does the implant work?

- The implant releases a low, steady dose of the hormone progesterone.
- Progesterone prevents pregnancy by stopping your ovulation (releasing an egg from your ovary each month). It also limits sperm movement, making it harder for sperm to get to the uterus (womb).

- Always check with your primary health care provider or pharmacist before taking other medications while you have the implant.
- If you are taking a medication that may change how the implant works, use a back-up birth control method or wait to have sex until after you stop taking the medication.

## Will the implant protect me from sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?

- The implant will **not** protect you from sexually transmitted infections, like:
  - › Herpes
  - › Chlamydia
  - › Genital warts
  - › Gonorrhea
  - › HIV (the virus that causes AIDS)
- Use a condom **every time** you have sex to protect yourself from STIs.
- **It is important to see your primary health care provider for routine sexual health care, STI testing, and pap tests.** If you do not have a primary health care provider, you can find a clinic in your area at:
  - › [www.nshealth.ca/clinics-programs-and-services/well-woman-clinics](http://www.nshealth.ca/clinics-programs-and-services/well-woman-clinics)

**See your primary health care provider right away if you have more serious side effects, like:**

- › Not being able to feel the implant under your skin
- › New leg cramps and swelling
- › Chest pain
- › A new diagnosis of a blood clot in your leg or lung

**If you do not have a primary health care provider, go to an urgent treatment centre, walk-in clinic, or to the nearest Emergency Department.**

**Rare complications:**

- › Nerve damage
- › Blood vessel damage
- › The implant moving from where it was inserted to another place in your body

**What can change how well the implant works?**

- Some medications may affect the implant and make it less effective at preventing pregnancy, like:
  - › Antibiotics (drugs for infections)
  - › Anticonvulsants (drugs for epilepsy)
  - › Antivirals (drugs for HIV)

**How well does the implant work?**

The implant is more than 99% effective at preventing pregnancy. This means there is less than a 1% chance you may get pregnant.

**When does the implant start working?**

- If you get the implant inserted (put in) between the first and 5th day of your menstrual cycle (period), the implant starts working right away. You **do not** need to use a back-up birth control method (like condoms).
- If you get the implant inserted on any other day of your menstrual cycle, you need to use a back-up birth control method for 7 days after the implant is inserted.

**What will happen when the implant is removed?**

- The implant will be removed by a health care provider using local anesthetic. This will help you to feel less pain.
- After the implant is removed, the progesterone that was preventing pregnancy is gone from your body **within 7 days (1 week)**.
- **After your implant is removed, start using another contraception method right away if you do not want to get pregnant.**

## **Do not get an implant inserted if you:**

- › know you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant.
- › know you have breast cancer or think you may have breast cancer.
- › have a personal history of breast cancer.
- › have liver tumours or active liver disease.
- › have undiagnosed abnormal genital bleeding.
- › have a current or past history of thromboembolic disorders or events.

Talk to your health care provider if you are not sure if you have any of the above.

## **What are the benefits of the implant?**

- It is very effective at preventing pregnancy.
- It may make your period cramps less painful.
- It may make your period flow lighter.
- There is no risk of forgetting your birth control.
- There is no estrogen in the implant.

## **Side effects**

### **Most common side effects:**

- › Headache
  - › Weight gain
  - › Acne
  - › Breast pain
  - › Irregular bleeding
  - › Mood swings
  - › Abdominal (stomach area) pain
  - › Bruising at the insertion site (where the implant is put in)
- These side effects usually go away after the **first 3 to 6 months** of having the implant.
  - Talk your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) if you are bothered by these side effects or if they last longer than 3 to 6 months.