

your guide to long-acting reversible contraception (LARC)

Helping you choose the method
of contraception that's best for you



There are lots of different methods of contraception to choose from. You can choose a method that suits your preferences and lifestyle.

This leaflet has information about 3 very effective methods – the implant, IUD and IUS – that work for 3 years or more and don't depend on you remembering to take or use them. It also has information about the contraceptive injection, which is usually given every 13 weeks. It's not quite as effective as the other 3 methods but is very effective as long as you get every injection on time.

Visit www.sexwise.org.uk for information about all contraceptive methods.

Is contraception free and where can I get it?

You can get **free** contraception, including emergency contraception, from most general practices, a contraception clinic or sexual health clinic, a young people's service (these have an upper age limit) and some online services.

You can also get free emergency contraceptive pills from some pharmacies and some genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinics.

How can I find a service?

The National Sexual Health Helpline provides confidential advice and information on all aspects of sexual health.

The number is **0300 123 7123**. It's open Monday to Friday from 9am-8pm and at weekends from 11am-4pm.

For more information on sexual health visit www.sexwise.org.uk

Information for young people can be found at www.brook.org.uk

You can find details of sexual health clinics and services and details of general practices and pharmacies on the following websites.

- England, www.nhs.uk
- Wales, 111.wales.nhs.uk
- Scotland, www.nhsinform.scot
- Northern Ireland, www.sexualhealthni.info and online.hscni.net

Emergency contraception

If you've had sex without contraception, or think your method might've failed, you can use emergency contraception. An intrauterine device (IUD) is the most effective option. Some people will get pregnant even when they take emergency pills correctly.

- An emergency IUD (copper coil) can be fitted up to 5 days after sex, or up to 5 days after the earliest time you could've ovulated (released an egg).
- An emergency contraceptive pill with the active ingredient ulipristal acetate (UPA) can be taken up to 5 days (120 hours) after sex. It's available with a prescription or to buy from a pharmacy.
- An emergency contraceptive pill with the hormone levonorgestrel can be taken up to 3 days (72 hours) after sex. It's available with a prescription or to buy from a pharmacy.

Try and get emergency contraception as soon as possible after unprotected sex.

Sexually transmitted infections

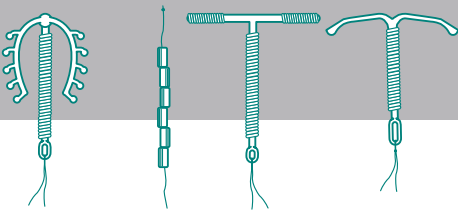
Most methods of contraception don't protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Condoms and internal condoms (also known as female condoms), used correctly and consistently, can help protect against STIs. If you can, avoid using spermicidally lubricated condoms. The spermicide commonly contains a chemical called nonoxinol-9, which may increase the risk of HIV and other infections.



Contraceptive implant

Effectiveness	<p>The implant is the most effective method of contraception.</p> <p>It's well over 99% effective. Fewer than 1 in 1,000 users will get pregnant in the first year of use.</p> <p>Once it's fitted, it works for contraception for 3 years.</p>
How it works	<p>A small, flexible rod is put under the skin of your upper arm. It releases the hormone progestogen. It stops ovulation (releasing an egg), thickens cervical mucus to stop sperm reaching an egg, and thins the lining of the uterus (womb) to prevent a fertilised egg implanting.</p>
How long it lasts	<p>Works for 3 years but can be taken out sooner if you choose.</p>
How it affects periods	<p>Your bleeding is likely to be unpredictable. Your periods may stop or you might have very little bleeding, or bleeding might be irregular or last longer.</p>
How it affects fertility	<p>Your fertility returns to normal as soon as the implant's removed.</p>
How it's inserted and removed	<p>A doctor or nurse uses a local anaesthetic to numb the skin on the inner side of your upper arm and then inserts the implant. It takes a few minutes and feels similar to having an injection. To remove it, the doctor or nurse uses a local anaesthetic, makes a small cut and gently pulls the implant out.</p>



Intrauterine device (IUD)

The copper IUD is over 99% effective. Fewer than 1 in 100 IUD users will get pregnant in a year. Once it's fitted, it works for contraception for 5 or 10 years, depending on the type.

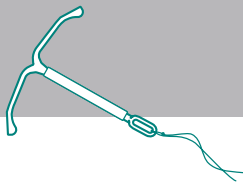
A small, flexible plastic and copper device is put into the uterus (womb). The copper stops sperm and eggs surviving. It also changes your cervical mucus to stop sperm from reaching an egg. An IUD may also stop a fertilised egg implanting in the uterus.

Works for 5 or 10 years, depending on type, but can be taken out sooner if you choose. If fitted at or after age 40, it can stay in place until after the menopause when contraception is no longer needed.

Your periods may be heavier, longer or more painful.

Your fertility returns to normal as soon as the IUD's taken out.

A doctor or nurse will insert the IUD. Your appointment will last around 20–30 minutes. Inserting the IUD usually takes around 5 minutes. It can be uncomfortable or painful for some people and you may be offered a local anaesthetic. The IUD has threads which hang through the cervix (opening of the uterus) into the top of your vagina. A doctor or nurse can remove the IUD by pulling gently on the threads.



Intrauterine system (IUS)

The hormonal IUS is over 99% effective. Fewer than 1 in 100 IUS users will get pregnant in a year.

Once it's fitted, it works for contraception for 3 or 6 years, depending on the type.

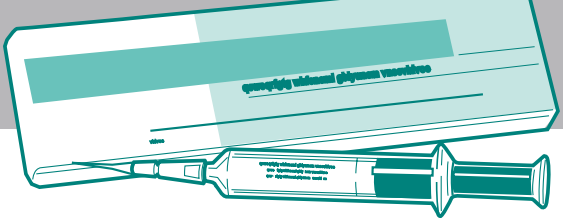
A small, flexible T-shaped plastic device is put into the uterus (womb). It releases the hormone progestogen. This thins the lining of the uterus to stop a fertilised egg implanting and thickens cervical mucus to stop sperm reaching an egg.

Works for 3 or 6 years, depending on type, but can be taken out sooner if you choose. If fitted at or after age 45, and being used for contraception, the Mirena or the Levosert IUS can stay in place until after the menopause, when contraception is no longer needed.

Periods often stop altogether. Any bleeding is usually lighter, shorter and often less painful.

Your fertility returns to normal as soon as the IUS is taken out.

A doctor or nurse will insert the IUS. Your appointment will last around 20–30 minutes. Inserting the IUS usually takes around 5 minutes. It can be uncomfortable or painful for some people and you may be offered a local anaesthetic. The IUS has threads which hang through the cervix (opening of the uterus) into the top of your vagina. A doctor or nurse can remove the IUS by pulling gently on the threads.



Contraceptive injection

With perfect use, over 99% effective. Fewer than 1 in 100 injection users will get pregnant in a year. Perfect use means that you always use the injection exactly as instructed, and get the injection on time every 13 weeks. With typical use, around 94% effective. Around 6 in 100 injection users will get pregnant in a year. Typical use means that you don't always use the injection as instructed, for example, if you have an injection late.

It releases the hormone progesterone. This stops ovulation (releasing an egg), thickens cervical mucus to stop sperm reaching an egg, and thins the lining of the uterus (womb) to stop a fertilised egg implanting. The injection can't be removed from the body so any side effects may continue for as long as it works and for some time afterwards.

Must be given every 13 weeks (Depo-Provera and Sayana Press) or 8 weeks (Noristerat). Noristerat isn't commonly used in the UK.

Your periods may stop, or bleeding may be irregular or longer.

Your periods and fertility may take up to 1 year to return after stopping the injection. It may take more time for some people and less time for others.

Depo-Provera is injected into a muscle, usually in your buttocks. It can sometimes be given in your arm. Sayana Press is injected beneath the skin at the front of your thigh or abdomen with a tiny needle. It's possible for you to be taught how to inject Sayana Press yourself at home. Ask your clinic or general practice about this.

A final word

This leaflet can only give you general information. The information is based on evidence-guided research from The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and the World Health Organization.

All methods of contraception come with a Patient Information Leaflet which provides detailed information about the method. Contact your doctor, practice nurse or a sexual health clinic if you're worried or unsure about anything.

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the digital version of this leaflet**



the sexual health company



sexwise.org.uk

www.fpa.org.uk

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