

# What a Contraceptive Implant Insertion, Exchange or Removal Involves

**When you have had a chance to ask the doctor or nurse any questions you will be asked to sign a consent form to say that you understand what the insertion, exchange or removal procedure involves and what risks there are.**

## THE FOLLOWING ARE IMPORTANT POINTS TO KNOW:

- ▶ Many women are anxious to know whether the procedure will be painful. Because numbing agent (local anaesthetic) is used fitting is normally a very quick and easy procedure with minimal discomfort. Again, the implant exchange or removal procedure is normally straightforward, with minimal discomfort but should be expected to take a few minutes longer
- ▶ As soon as the procedure is finished you can return to your normal activities and, for those that drive, this include driving
- ▶ When the anaesthetic wears off your arm may feel mildly tender. You can take your normal pain relief if required
- ▶ It is best to avoid strenuous activity with the arm for the first 24 hours to reduce the risk of excessive pain or bruising

## THE FITTING PROCEDURE INVOLVES THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

- ▶ We ask you to lie down on a couch with your arm stretched out or bent at the elbow resting on the couch or a pillow
- ▶ Often a small mark will be made at the insertion site and the area around this mark will be cleaned
- ▶ We use an injection of local anaesthetic to numb the area which can sting briefly as its being administered. The injection is the only mild discomfort you should experience
- ▶ We wait a short while and will test to ensure the local anaesthetic has numbed that part of the arm before proceeding with fitting the implant

- ▶ Alternatively, some clinicians may apply a topical numbing spray immediately to the area before proceeding to insertion
- ▶ Putting in an implant normally takes less than a minute
- ▶ As the local anaesthetic removes the sensation of pain but not touch, women can often feel slight pressure as the implant goes in but this should not be painful
- ▶ The clinician will assist you to feel for the implant and confirm its presence in your arm with them before dressing the wound and applying a pressure bandage around the top of your arm. The bandage is used to help minimise bruising and should be left in place for the first 24 hours
- ▶ You can take the bandage off after 24 hours. It is normal to see a small amount of bruising at or around the site of insertion. Cover the wound with a waterproof plaster or equivalent waterproof dressing and keep the wound clean and dry for a total of 5 days
- ▶ You can shower or bathe as normal keeping the arm dry. Wrapping the area with a clean plastic bag or cling film will help prevent the dressing getting wet
- ▶ If you have had paper sutures (also known as steristrips) applied to the wound, please remove these by day 5. Take care to gently lift both ends of the paper sutures to the direction of the centre of the wound before removing them. If they do not peel off easily soaking them with warm water aides their removal
- ▶ The wound should be fully healed and the bruising gone by about 7-10 days

### THE EXCHANGE OR REMOVAL PROCEDURE:

- This is a very similar experience with the only discomfort being for the brief time the local anaesthetic injection is being administered
- Removing an implant can take a few minutes
- After we have checked the area has gone numb we make a small cut (less than 0.5cm) through which we remove the implant
- Whilst the area is numb expect to feel touching but this should not be painful.  
We can offer further local anaesthetic if it's needed
- If we are replacing the implant (an exchange) we can use the same cut to put the new implant in. If, however, you have had a number of implants in the same site we may advise to change the implant site to the other arm. This is to prevent thickened scar tissue developing
- The rest of the procedure and aftercare will be as for fitting with paper sutures and a pressure dressing being applied to the wound (See above)

### REGARDING ANY RISKS TO THE PROCEDURE:

- Fainting. This is a very rare occurrence and not usually serious. Most women recover spontaneously. It can be due to a woman's anxiety at the time of the procedure.

- Mild discomfort and mild to moderate bruising of the arm can be expected after an insertion, exchange or removal of an implant
- Allergic reaction to the local anaesthetic or the implant are very rare risks. If the wound or surrounding area feels hot or swollen or you notice any skin changes (such as a rash) it is important to seek urgent medical advice
- An implant should always be palpable after insertion. If you cannot feel your implant please avoid sexual intercourse until you have had your implant checked by a doctor/nurse fitter

Specialists in Contraception and Reproductive Health feel the contraceptive implant is an excellent form of contraception as it falls under the category of Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC)

The implant is licenced for 3 years contraceptive use; has a very low failure rate; is easily reversible and has no lasting effect on a woman's fertility upon removal.

There are no maximum number of implants a woman can have.

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If you have concerns after your implant fit, exchange or removal we would be happy to see you. Please call the **Essex Sexual Health Service Intelligence Centre** central booking number on ☎ **0300 003 1212** to book a coil review appointment.

Please refer to the Essex Sexual Health Service website for further information including clinic locations and opening times: [www.essexsexualhealthservice.org.uk](http://www.essexsexualhealthservice.org.uk)