



Scan with your smartphone to get an e-version of this leaflet. You might need an app to scan this code.



# ***Contraceptive implant: fitting or removal***

***Information for women***

**Sexual and Reproductive Health  
NHS Grampian**

## ***Getting the right information***

Before having a contraceptive implant inserted, you should have a chance to discuss the benefits, side effects and alternative options.

This may be a face to face or telephone consultation with a nurse or doctor in your own medical practice or at a Sexual Health Clinic. Call **0345 337 9900** if you want to arrange a call to discuss details with one of the Grampian Sexual Health Team.

The SEXWISE website has reliable information on all contraceptive options:

 **[www.sexwise.fpa.org.uk](http://www.sexwise.fpa.org.uk)**

## ***How do I make an appointment?***

Call **0345 337 9900** if you want to make an appointment at one of the Grampian Health Clinics below:

- Health Village, Frederick Street, Aberdeen
- Dr Gray's Hospital, Elgin
- Peterhead Health Centre
- Fraserburgh Hospital

You may be able to book online. The link for this is:

 **[www.nhsgrampian.org/sexualhealth](http://www.nhsgrampian.org/sexualhealth)**

## ***How long will the appointment take?***

Routine appointments are 20 minutes although the actual procedure only usually takes less than 10 minutes.

If the implant is deep and a scan may be needed we arrange a 40 minute appointment.

## ***How is an implant inserted or removed?***

A small area of skin on the inner part of your upper arm is numbed. This is usually done with a local anaesthetic injection but you may be offered a freezing skin spray for insertion if you prefer.

The local anaesthetic injection may sting for about a minute. It usually takes 2 to 3 minutes to work and the skin will stay numb for about half an hour.

The spray will make the skin feel very cold. It usually takes less than a minute to work and the skin stays numb for 2 to 3 minutes afterwards. The doctor or nurse will check that the skin is numb before going ahead.

The procedure should not feel sharp or painful but it is normal to feel pressure.

Implant fitting usually takes about a minute; the skin incision is less than 3mm.

Implant removal usually takes less than 5 minutes and the incision is usually less than 5mm.

The incision is covered with an adhesive dressing. You may also have Steristrips® (paper stitches).

## ***What should I expect afterwards?***

You will be able to move your arm and hand and can drive after the procedure.

After the local anaesthetic has worn off your arm may be tender over the skin incision/new implant.

Avoid activities where the implant area of your arm may be grabbed/ knocked into for a few days.

Keep the dressing dry and do not change it for 24 to 48 hours. You may need a small over the counter adhesive plaster for a few days after this.

It is very common to have bruising after insertion or removal. This may take 1 to 2 weeks to fade.

Very rarely, women can get altered sensation “pins and needles” in their arm or hand after an implant procedure. This may happen in up to 2 in 1000 fitting procedures and up to 7 in 1000 removal procedures. Sensation usually goes back to normal over a few hours or days.

Infection at the wound site in the first week is rare, but seek medical advice if the skin becomes red or hot or tender, if there is a pus discharge or if you have a fever.

The nurse or doctor fitting the implant will check it can be felt and show you where to feel it.

There is a chance that the implant can be fitted deeper than intended. This is rare - less than 9 in 1000 implants.

It is extremely unlikely that the implant will move elsewhere in the body. This happens for less than 3 in every million implant fittings.

## ***What should I do about contraception before having the implant fitted?***

- Use contraception carefully until the implant is fitted.
- If an implant is fitted within the first 5 days of the start of a period, miscarriage or abortion or within 21 days of having a baby, it works as a contraceptive straightaway.
- If it is fitted at other times, **it takes 7 days to get working**. It is important to use other contraception or avoid sex for 7 days **AFTER** the implant is fitted and do a pregnancy test 4 weeks after the implant is fitted.

## ***What should I do about contraception before my implant is removed?***

**If your implant is still in date**, there is no need to avoid sex before the implant comes out.

- The contraceptive effect stops as soon as it's removed.
- If you start the pill, patch, ring or injection for contraception on the same day that the implant is removed, they will work straightaway.
- If you have a new implant fitted on the same day, it will work straightaway.
- You could have an IUD/IUS (coil) fitted at the same visit. Please let us know in advance if you choose this.
- If there is **even one day** between removing the implant and starting a new method of contraception the new method may not work straightaway. The nurse or doctor removing the implant will discuss this with you.

**If your implant is past its change date**, you cannot rely on it for contraception any more and you need to use another method until your appointment if you do not want to become pregnant.

- The implant is licensed for 3 years but is likely to give a similar level of contraceptive protection for 4 years.
- During the COVID pandemic, the FSRH recommend that routine change can be delayed up to 4 years. Some women keep the implant but use condoms/ pills as well. You can discuss this with your GP or the Sexual Health Clinic.

### ***Deeper or difficult implant removal***

The contraceptive implant may be deep or difficult to remove for around 9 in 1000 women.

Sometimes it may be too deep to feel at all.

Sometimes a nurse or doctor will try to remove an implant but have to give up as it will not come out.

We will arrange an appointment with an experienced doctor who could do an ultrasound scan of your arm to find the implant if needed.

We can go ahead and remove most deep implants in the clinic. The doctor would discuss your procedure with you in more detail.

If the implant is very deep or close to nerves/blood vessels, we would arrange for removal another day by the plastic surgery team at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary.

A local anaesthetic injection is used to numb the area. The skin incision may be 1.5 to 2cm long and need to be closed with fine stitches. We will advise whether these are dissolvable or need to be removed.

You can drive after the procedure but would need to avoid activities where you are moving your arm a lot or for a long time or lifting heavy weights for 3 to 5 days.

### ***Contact telephone number***

**NHS Grampian Sexual Health Service**

** 0345 337 9900**

**This leaflet is also available in large print.  
Other formats and languages can be  
supplied on request. Please call Quality  
Development on 01224 554149 for a copy.  
Ask for leaflet 1168.**

Feedback from the public helped us to develop this leaflet.  
If you have any comments on how we can improve it,  
please call 01224 554149 to let us know.

Sexual and Reproductive Health  
Aberdeen Health Village  
Frederick Street, Aberdeen, AB24 5HY  
Leaflet supplied by:

revised February 2021  
©NHS Grampian

Quality Development, Foresterhill