

Your guide to
**long-acting reversible
contraceptives (LARCs)**

There are many different contraceptive methods available in the UK and you should choose one that suits *you*. This leaflet provides information about four methods that do not depend on you remembering to take or use them to be effective. The figures quoted in this leaflet for how well each method works are based on extensive independent research.

Contact **fpa** for more information about all contraceptive methods.

Q Is contraception free and where can I go to get it?

A You can obtain **free** contraception, including emergency contraception, from most general practices, a contraception or sexual health clinic, a young people's service (these have an upper age limit) and some genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinics.

Q How do I find out about contraception services?

A Contact **sexual health direct**, run by **fpa**, on 0845 122 8690 or visit www.fpa.org.uk.

- Get details of general practices from www.nhs.uk, www.wales.nhs.uk, www.show.scot.nhs.uk or www.n-i.nhs.uk. In England and

Wales call NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 and in Scotland NHS 24 on 0845 4 24 24 24. In Northern Ireland call **fpa's** helpline on 0845 122 8687.

- See a telephone directory or ask a health centre, pharmacy, hospital, midwife, health visitor or advice centre.
- For young people's services contact Brook on 0808 802 1234.

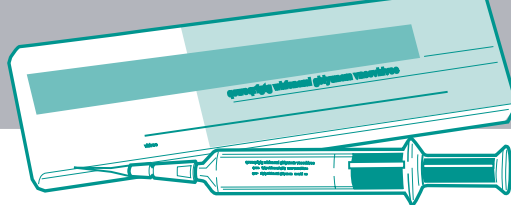
Emergency contraception

If you have had sex without using contraception or think your method might have failed there are two emergency methods you can use.

- The emergency hormonal pill – must be taken up to three days (72 hours) after sex. It is more effective the earlier it is taken after sex.
- An IUD – must be fitted up to five days after sex, or up to five days after the earliest time you could have released an egg (ovulation).

Sexually transmitted infections

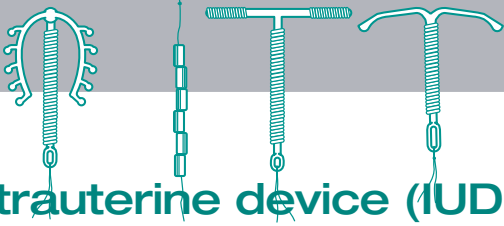
Most methods of contraception do not protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Male and female condoms, when used correctly and consistently, can help protect against STIs. Avoid using condoms containing Nonoxinol 9 as this does not protect against HIV and may even increase the risk of infection.



Contraceptive implant

Contraceptive injection

Effectiveness	Over 99 per cent effective. Less than one woman in 1,000 will get pregnant over three years.	Over 99 per cent effective. Less than four women in 1,000 will get pregnant over two years.
How it works	A small flexible rod is put under the skin of the upper arm. It releases the hormone progestogen. It stops ovulation, thickens cervical mucus to stop sperm reaching an egg, and thins the lining of the uterus (womb) to prevent a fertilised egg implanting.	It releases the hormone progestogen which stops ovulation, thickens cervical mucus to prevent sperm reaching an egg and thins the lining of the uterus to prevent a fertilised egg implanting.
How long it lasts	Works for three years but can be taken out sooner.	Lasts for 12 weeks (Depo-Provera) or eight weeks (Noristerat).
How it affects periods	Your periods may stop, be irregular or longer.	Your periods may stop, be irregular or longer.
How it affects fertility	When the implant is removed your fertility will return to normal.	Your periods and fertility may take time to return after you stop using the injection.
How it is inserted/removed	A doctor or nurse numbs your skin in the inner area of your upper arm with a local anaesthetic and 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 tiny cut and gently pulls the implant out.	The hormone is injected into a muscle, usually in your buttocks. Depo-Provera can also be injected into the arm. Noristerat is a thicker solution so may be more painful to receive. The injection cannot be removed from the body so any side effects may continue for as long as it works and for some time afterwards.



Intrauterine device (IUD)

Over 99 per cent effective. Less than two women in 100 will get pregnant over five years. Older IUDs have less copper and are less effective.

A small plastic and copper device is put into the uterus. It stops sperm reaching an egg, and may also stop a fertilised egg implanting in the uterus.

Can stay in 5–10 years depending on type but can be taken out sooner.

Your periods may be heavier or longer or more painful.

When the IUD is removed your fertility will return to normal.

A doctor or nurse will insert the IUD. This takes 15–20 minutes. It can be uncomfortable or painful and you may want to use a local anaesthetic. The IUD has two soft threads which hang through the opening of the uterus. A doctor or nurse can remove the IUD by pulling gently on its threads.



Intrauterine system (IUS)

Over 99 per cent effective. Less than one woman in 100 will get pregnant over five years.

A small, T-shaped plastic device, which releases the hormone progesterone, is put into the uterus. This thickens cervical mucus to prevent sperm reaching an egg, thins the lining of the uterus to prevent a fertilised egg implanting, and may stop ovulation.

Works for five years but can be taken out sooner.

Your periods usually become lighter, shorter and sometimes less painful. They may stop altogether.

When the IUS is removed your fertility will return to normal.

A doctor or nurse will insert the IUS. This takes 15–20 minutes. It can be uncomfortable or painful and you may want to use a local anaesthetic. The IUS has two soft threads which hang through the opening of the uterus. A doctor or nurse can remove the IUS by pulling gently on its threads.

How fpa can help you

sexual health direct is a nationwide service run by **fpa**. It provides:

- confidential information and advice on contraception, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy choices, abortion and planning a pregnancy
- details of contraception, sexual health and genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinics and sexual assault referral centres.

fpa helplines

England

helpline 0845 122 8690

9am to 6pm Monday to Friday

Northern Ireland

helpline 0845 122 8687

9am to 5pm Monday to Thursday

9am to 4.30pm Friday

or visit **fpa's** website www.fpa.org.uk

A final word

The information in this booklet is based on evidence-guided research from the World Health Organization, the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence guidance. Different people may give you different information and advice on certain points. All methods of contraception come with a Patient Information Leaflet which provides detailed information about the method.

Remember – contact your doctor, practice nurse or a contraception clinic if you are worried or unsure about anything.



Registered charity number 250187.

Supported by the Department of Health

© **fpa** October 2009 ISBN: 978-1-905506-77-4