



Longer-lasting contraception

**Your guide to
sexual health and
wellbeing**

This resource may also be made available on request in the following formats:



 **0131 314 5300**

 **nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net**

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Your guide to longer-lasting contraception

This leaflet gives you key facts about the three most effective types of longer-lasting contraception - the intrauterine device (IUD), the intrauterine system (IUS) and the implant. Further information on other types of contraception is available at www.sexualhealthscotland.co.uk

Contraception is an individual choice and it may change from time to time, as your lifestyle does. Contraception that lasts a long time and that you don't need to think about every day may be the best method for you. Longer-lasting contraception isn't new and, in fact, it is already used by 1 in 25 women in Scotland. However, you may not know much about it, or only know what you've read in the press or heard from other people, and some of this might be misleading.

What does longer-lasting contraception mean?

You don't have to remember to take it every day or think about it every time you have sex. This makes it very effective - over 99% reliable in preventing pregnancy. Once you have started using longer-lasting contraception, it lasts for several years.

Longer-lasting contraception starts working very quickly but stops within days after it is removed and won't affect your future fertility. It is very safe and most women can use it up until the menopause. Occasionally there are some side effects, including changes to your periods.

It is still important to practise safer sex. Just like the pill, longer-lasting contraception doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) so you should still use a condom until you and your partner have been tested for STIs.

Why choose longer-lasting contraception?

Ask yourself if longer-lasting contraception would suit you and your lifestyle right now.

Take time to think about:

- your sex life
- your health
- your work
- your family.

Choosing contraception is about what is right for you, whatever age you are. It may be hard to remember to take the pill, especially if you have a busy life or travel a lot, or work irregular hours. You might want contraception that also helps heavy or painful periods. You may not want to have children at the moment, perhaps never, or you may feel your family is complete or that you want to have a gap between children.

Your GP, midwife or the sexual health clinic staff can explain what types of longer-lasting contraception may be suitable for you - all of the ones detailed here can be used by women of all ages and regardless of whether you have had children or not.

They will ask about your medical history and types of contraception you have used before. They will also help you choose the best method for you, explain its use, and arrange for fitting at a suitable time. They will also ask some questions to check you are not already pregnant or at risk of having an STI.

How is longer-lasting contraception fitted?

You need to see a specially trained doctor or nurse to have longer-lasting contraception fitted. This might be at your local GP practice or by the sexual health clinic staff, or they may refer you somewhere else if they can't offer the method you choose. Midwives can also fit longer-lasting contraception.

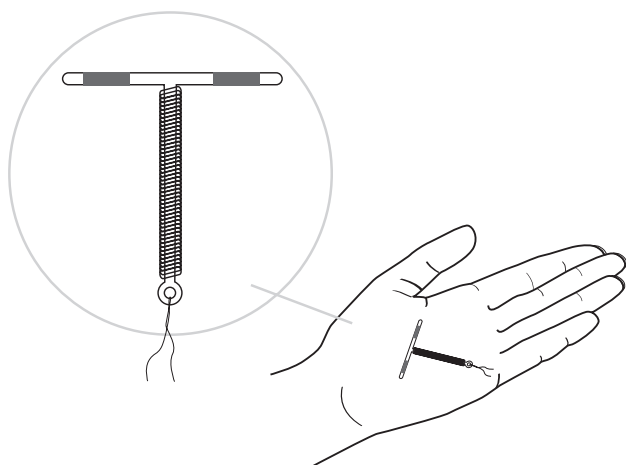
Like all methods of contraception, your body may take a little time to adjust - if the longer-lasting method you choose does not suit you, it can be removed at any time. If you have any concerns, discuss these with your GP or the sexual health clinic staff.

What types of longer-lasting contraceptives are there?

There are three main types of longer-lasting contraception - the IUD, IUS, and implant. They work by stopping ovulation or fertilisation, or both, and give you over 99% protection against pregnancy. They are suitable for you at any age and irrespective of whether you have had children or not.

All three types are discreet. Once fitted, you shouldn't have to think about your longer-lasting contraception - the nurse or doctor can teach you how to check it is still in place.

The intrauterine device (IUD)



- An IUD or 'coil' is a small plastic and copper device, fitted inside your womb.
- An IUD can last for 5 to 10 years.
- It is a hormone-free contraception.
- It suits women who can't use the combined pill or want an alternative to the pill.

Possible side effects:

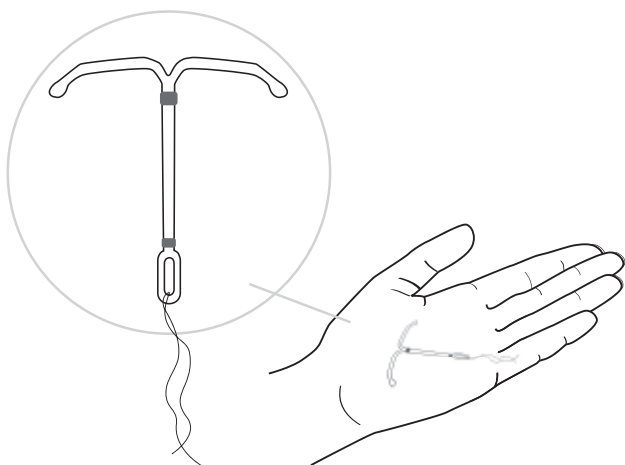
Your periods may last longer, become heavier or more painful, but this often improves during the first few months of use.

The consultation will take around 20 minutes, including a discussion and fitting the device. Having an IUD fitted can be a little uncomfortable but a local anaesthetic or pain relief tablets will help. You may experience some pain and light bleeding for a couple of days afterwards.

Removing an IUD doesn't take long. The doctor or nurse just gently pulls on small threads coming through the cervix (neck of the womb).

Even though your doctor or nurse is trained to fit this type of contraception, in very rare cases - around 1 in 1,000 - an IUD might move outside your womb during fitting. This can be painful and the device may need to be surgically removed. To make sure this has not happened, you may be invited for a check-up after 6 weeks.

The intrauterine system (IUS)



- An IUS is a small, T-shaped plastic device fitted inside your womb that releases a hormone like progesterone.
- An IUS can last for 5 years.
- It suits women who can't use the combined pill or want an alternative to the pill.

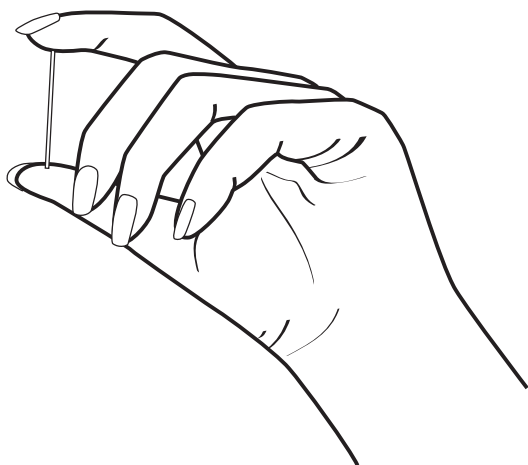
Possible side effects:

A few women complain of acne, headaches and sore breasts. Your periods are likely to become lighter, shorter and less painful, and even stop completely after a while.

The consultation will take around 20 minutes, including a discussion and fitting the device. Having an IUS fitted can be a little uncomfortable but a local anaesthetic or pain relief tablets will help. You may experience some pain and light bleeding for a couple of days afterwards.

Even though your doctor or nurse is trained to fit this type of contraception, in very rare cases - around 1 in 1,000 - an IUS might move outside your womb or cervix during fitting. This can be painful and the device may need to be surgically removed. To make sure this has not happened, you may be invited for a check-up after 6 weeks.

The implant



- An implant is a small flexible rod that releases a hormone and is inserted under the skin on the inside of your upper arm.
- An implant can last for 3 years.
- It suits women who can't use the combined pill or want an alternative to the pill.
- It doesn't require an internal examination.
- An implant can be less effective if you use certain types of medicine, especially drugs to treat HIV, epilepsy and tuberculosis, and the complementary medicine St John's wort.

Possible side effects:

Your periods are likely to become irregular/unpredictable and may even stop altogether - it depends on the individual.

A few women complain of acne or headaches.

Having an implant put in your arm feels a bit like having an injection. A local anaesthetic to numb the area will stop it hurting. Your arm may be a little sore and bruised for a couple of days, so you will need to cover the area with a dressing for 48 hours, and keep it clean and dry for a week.

An implant is removed through a tiny cut in your skin. You can have a local anaesthetic so it won't hurt and you won't be left with a noticeable scar.

Know the facts from the myths

Although longer-lasting contraception is over 99% effective and very safe and straightforward to use, you might be worried because of what you've heard from other people or the media. You need all the facts before you can decide if this is the right choice for you.

Q: Can longer-lasting contraception affect fertility?

A: No. When an IUD, IUS or implant is removed it stops working immediately and your fertility returns in just a few days.

Q: Does longer-lasting contraception have side effects?

A: Yes, it can have, and you should be aware of these when you're deciding if longer-lasting contraception is right for you. However, not every woman will experience side effects and, if they do, they may be mild and not last long, just until your body gets used to this type of contraception. Besides which, all methods of contraception have some side effects. Longer-lasting contraception can have **positive benefits**, such as less painful periods, as

well as the **overall advantages** of being over 99% reliable and not having to remember to use it. So it's worth giving your body time to adjust.

Q: Can longer-lasting contraception move or fall out?

A: Implants do not fall out. The IUD and the IUS occasionally do.

If you cannot feel the threads of your IUD or IUS, it might have fallen out - this happens to around 1 in 20 women. If this happens, go and see your GP or the sexual health clinic staff. Use a condom until you have been checked.

Q: Is there a risk of infection?

A: There is a very small chance you could get an infection in the first month after an IUD/IUS is fitted. This is more likely if you already have an infection so, if there is a possibility of this, you will be offered a test before the IUD/IUS is fitted. There is also a small chance of infection after removal. Contact your GP or sexual health clinic staff if you think you have an infection.

Know the facts from the myths

Q: Can you see longer-lasting contraception?

A: No. The IUS and IUD are very discreet. You can feel to check it is in place but you and your partner won't notice it during sex. Very occasionally you might see the implant just under the skin in your arm.

Q: What if I have troublesome bleeding?

A: Go back to your GP or see the sexual health clinic staff who can check whether you have any other problems causing this bleeding.

Q: Will I put on weight?

A: There is no evidence to suggest that longer-lasting contraception causes weight gain.

Q: Can longer-lasting contraception stop being effective?

A: You're still over 99% protected against pregnancy if you need to take medication, such as antibiotics, at the same time as using longer-lasting contraception. Only the implant is

affected by certain types of medicine and your doctor or nurse will explain this.

How quickly longer-lasting contraception becomes fully effective depends on the stage you're at in your monthly cycle when it is fitted. Your doctor or nurse can advise you if you need to use extra protection at any time.

Q: Is longer-lasting contraception safe while breastfeeding?

A: Yes. You can be fitted with longer-lasting contraception a month after giving birth. It is safe to use if you are breastfeeding and won't affect your milk supply.

Q: What if I become pregnant?

A: Longer-lasting contraception is over 99% effective, however, there is a slight chance you could become pregnant. No contraception is 100% guaranteed. If you become pregnant with an IUD or IUS in place, there is a small chance that the pregnancy may develop in the fallopian tube (ectopic pregnancy). If you think you may be pregnant, whatever method you are using, you should see your GP as soon as possible.

What to do next

Your GP or sexual health clinic staff can tell you about longer-lasting contraception in more detail and help you decide if this is the right choice for you. If your local practice or sexual health clinic does not have staff trained to fit longer-lasting contraception, they will refer you to somewhere that does.

You may have heard about other types of longer-lasting contraception, such as injections and vaginal rings. These are similar to the methods in this leaflet but don't last as long. You can get further information on these other types of contraception from your GP or sexual health clinic staff, or at www.sexualhealthscotland.co.uk

It is still important to practise safer sex. Longer-lasting contraception doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) so you should still use a condom until you and your partner have been tested for STIs.

Longer-lasting contraception – giving you more choice

**For more information, visit
www.sexualhealthscotland.co.uk or
call NHS inform free on
0800 22 44 88 (textphone 18001
0800 22 44 88).**

**Please check www.nhsinform.scot
for opening hours. It also provides an
interpreting service.**

