

Norplant (a contraceptive method similar to Implanon) was approved in 1990 by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). After being sued by 50 thousand women the company settled for \$50 million in compensation and drug production stopped by 2002.<sup>13</sup>

However, in 2006 the FDA approved Implanon, despite the risks posed by its similarities to Norplant.

## The help that women deserve

Women deserve to be fully informed with the facts. Only then will they be able to have full consent. Concealing or usurping this information can seriously jeopardize a woman's autonomy.

If you need to use a safe and natural way of planning your family (provided you have a just reason for doing so), then you might want to investigate a method of natural family planning such as the Billings Ovulation Method, or the Creighton Method (also known as Napro Technology). These methods help couples to understand their fertility by teaching them to recognise when ovulation is occurring. They can be used responsibly to either achieve or avoid a pregnancy.

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### Family Life International (Australia)

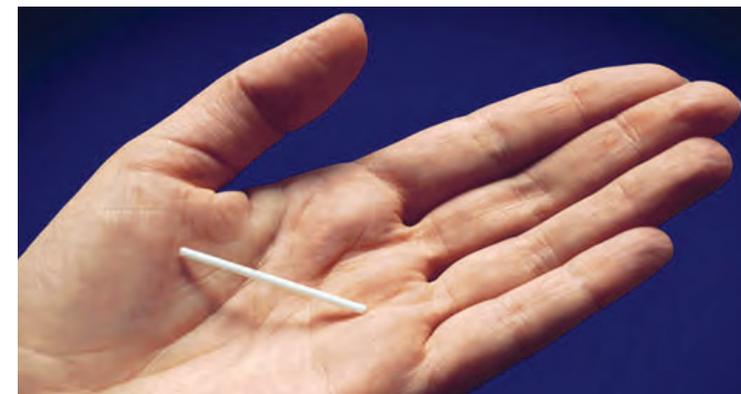
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PO Box 205 Broadway NSW 2007

Ph: (02) 9519 9111 / Fax: (02) 9519 9622

What you should know about

# Implanon



## What is Implanon?

Implanon is a contraceptive device inserted under the skin of the inner upper arm.

It consists of a 4 cm x 2 mm rod containing 68 mg of a synthetic progestogen called etonogestrel. It is operative for 3 years after which it must be surgically removed.

## How does it work?

Etonogestrel (the primary agent in implanon) is a synthetic form of the naturally occurring female sex hormone, progesterone.

Etonogestrel tricks the body processes into thinking that ovulation has already occurred, by maintaining high levels of the synthetic progesterone.

This prevents the release of eggs from the ovaries and thickens the cervical mucus making it difficult for sperm to pass through.

It also changes the lining of the uterus, "making it unsuitable for pregnancy".<sup>1</sup>

This means that a newly conceived human embryo will not be able to implant in the womb but will, instead, be expelled from the body. Implanon, therefore, can have an abortifacient action.<sup>2</sup>

**Women are often told what the drugs will do but not how they will do it.**

## Side Effects

Reported as the most common symptoms are:

- Acne and skin blemishes
- Osteoporosis
- Increased weight
- Pain during sexual intercourse
- Breast, back & stomach pain/nausea
- Crushing chest pain
- Increased vaginal discharge and itching

## Research

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has classified Implanon as possibly carcinogenic (Group 2B).

MIMS notes the high risk of breast cancer for those using contraceptive devices such as Implanon.<sup>5</sup>

Serious consequences may be associated with the insertion and removal of Implanon. It can lead to difficult or impossible removals. Even with surgery there is sometimes failure to remove. Failure to remove Implanon may result in infertility, ectopic pregnancy, or inability to stop a drug related adverse event.<sup>6</sup>

Use of Implanon results in an increased risk of several serious cardiovascular conditions. Cigarette smoking further increases this risk.

It can also present a danger in the event of long-term immobilization due to surgery or illness.<sup>6</sup>

Disrupted uterine bleeding is the most frequent reason Implanon is discontinued.<sup>7</sup>

- Irregular bleeding cycle, with unpredictable spotting, absence of periods
- Tender, swollen glands in the neck, nasal and ear congestion
- Blood clots, heart attack, stroke
- Loss of interest or pleasure
- Feeling sad or empty, crying
- Rapidly changing moods, depression
- Paranoia depersonalisation
- Dysphoria, euphoria<sup>3,4</sup>



Safety and efficacy of Implanon have not been established.<sup>8</sup> The effects on babies who are breastfed is unknown and untested. Many medical reports encourage staying away from unnatural hormones which would be transmitted to the child via the breast milk.

## Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

1. Firstly, the presence of progesterone thins the vaginal wall, making it far more vulnerable to abrasions and infections by STD's or HIV.<sup>9</sup>

2. Secondly, this damage and thus greater vulnerability to STD's is compounded by the fact that the implant will not protect you against HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), presenting a much higher risk of STD contraction.<sup>9</sup>

## Background on Implanon

Implanon was first tested and marketed in Indonesia, where the processes of monitoring are not stringent.<sup>10</sup> Implanon's Indonesian trials, on which registration was partly based, actually included incorrect data in its study reports.<sup>11</sup> Because of this the market itself becomes the real testing ground for the drug.<sup>12</sup>

