



# **Contraceptive implant: Fitting or removal**

**Information for women**

**Sexual Health Services**

**NHS Shetland**

## **Getting the correct 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. Email [shet.sexualhealth@nhs.scot](mailto:shet.sexualhealth@nhs.scot) if you would like to arrange a call to discuss details with one of the Shetland Sexual Health Team.

The SEXWISE website has reliable information on all contraceptive options:

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

**[nhs.uk/conditions/contraception/contraceptive-implant](http://nhs.uk/conditions/contraception/contraceptive-implant)**

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

Email [shet.sexualhealth@nhs.scot](mailto:shet.sexualhealth@nhs.scot)

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

Routine appointments are 20 minutes, although the procedure can take less than 10.

If the implant is deep or cannot be located you would be referred to Minor ops at the Gilbert Bain or the Sexual Health Clinic in Aberdeen for removal.

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

A small area of skin on your upper arm is numbed. This is likely to be done using a freezing spray but you may be offered a local anaesthetic injection if you would prefer.

The spray will make the skin feel very cold. It can take less than a minute to work and skin will be numb for 2 to 3 minutes afterwards. The nurse will check that the skin is numb before proceeding.

The local anaesthetic injection may sting to begin with. It can take 2-3 minutes to work and the skin will stay numb for about half an hour.

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

Implant fitting usually takes around a minute and the skin incision is less than 3mm.

Implant removal can take less than 5 minutes and the incision is less than 5mm.

The incision will be covered with an adhesive dressing with the possibility of Steristrips (paper stitches).

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

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

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

Avoid activities in which the implant area of your arm may be grabbed/knocked 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 following this.

It is common to have bruising following the insertion or removal. This may take up to 2 weeks to fade.

Very rarely, there can be altered sensation “pins and needles” in the arm or hand following an implant procedure. This is possible in up to 2 in 1000 fitting procedures and up to 7 in 1000 removals. Sensation is likely to return to normal after a few hours or days.

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

The nurse fitting the implant will check the implant can be felt and show you where to feel for 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 in less than 3 in every million fittings.

### **What should I do about contraception prior to implant fitting?**

**If you implant is still in date**, there is no need to avoid sex before the implant is removed.

- The contraceptive will no longer be effective as soon as it is removed.
- If you start the pill, patch or injection on the same day, it will work straightaway.
- If there is even one day between removing the implant and starting new method of contraception the new method may not work straight away.

**If your implant is past its change date**, you can no longer rely on this for contraception and you must 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 FRSH recommended that the 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 nurse.

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

The contraceptive implant may be deep or difficult to remove this can happen to around 19 in 1000 women.

There can be the possibility that it may be too deep to locate.

A nurse can try to remove an implant but on occasion this may not be successful.

We will arrange an appointment with an experienced doctor at the sexual health clinic in Aberdeen who may do an ultrasound scan of your arm to locate the implant if necessary . They can then go ahead and remove most deep implants in the Aberdeen clinic. The doctor would discuss your procedure with you in more detail.

If the implant is very deep or close to nerves/blood vessels an appointment would be made with the plastic surgery team at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary for removal.

A local anaesthetic injection is given to numb the area, the skin incision may be 1.5 to 2 cm long and need to be closed with fine stitches. You will be advised if these are dissolvable or need to be removed.

You can drive after the procedure but must avoid activities which involve moving your arm excessively or for a long period of time as well as lifting heavy weights for 3-5 days.

**Contact:**

**NHS Shetland Sexual Health Service**

**Clinic—Monday evening 17.45 to 19.45 call: 01595743000**

**Email [shet.sexualhealth@nhs.scot](mailto:shet.sexualhealth@nhs.scot)**

