



# Contraceptive Implant (Nexplanon)

## PATIENT EDUCATION SERIES

**What is Nexplanon?** Nexplanon replaced the birth control implant Implanon in 2010. Birth control implants have been used worldwide for close to 20 years. It is a flexible plastic rod about the size of a cardboard matchstick which is inserted just under the skin on the inner side of the upper arm. It contains etonogestrel (a form of progesterone) which is released over a three year period to provide very effective protection against pregnancy. Insertion requires a local anesthetic and only takes a few minutes.

### How does Nexplanon work?

Nexplanon works by changing the cervical mucus (making it harder for sperm to swim through) and decreasing tubal motility, thus inhibiting fertilization. To a lesser degree it also make the lining of the uterus less receptive to implantation and can inhibit ovulation.

### How effective is Nexplanon?

Nexplanon is one of the most effective methods of birth control. It is 99.9% effective which means that out of every 100 women who use Nexplanon in one year less than 1 will get pregnant. Nexplanon may be less effective in women who are overweight. After three years, the effectiveness decreases and the rod should be removed and a new one inserted if desired. Nexplanon is not protective against sexually transmitted infections.

### What are the advantages of Nexplanon?

- Nexplanon is safe and highly effective.
- Can be used by women who can't use estrogen based contraception.
- Provides continuous pregnancy protection for 3 years and can be removed anytime during the three year period.
- It is effective within 24 hours of implantation.
- After removal, a woman's ability to become pregnant returns quickly.
- It is a private and discreet birth control method.
- Most women cannot see Nexplanon after insertion (although most can feel it under the skin).
- It is convenient, does not require a daily act to maintain its coverage.
- Due to the steady hormone delivery it has fewer hormonal ups and downs than daily birth control methods.

### What are the disadvantages of Nexplanon?

- Irregular and unpredictable bleeding is the most common side effect which can occur during the entire time one uses the implant. For many women periods become fewer and lighter, or stop completely, but other women report having longer heavier periods or an increase in spotting (breakthrough bleeding).

In studies, 1 out of 10 women stopped using Implanon because of bleeding changes.

- 3.6% of clinical study participants experienced implant site complications such as pain, or hematoma, redness or swelling at the time of implantation. Removal complications occurred in 1.7% of study participants and included broken or damaged implant, difficult localization and slight movement. There is a slight risk of scarring from insertion or removal.
- Side effects besides irregular bleeding can include mood swings, weight gain, breast tenderness, headache or acne. Other side effects that have been reported include dizziness, stomach pain, hair loss, painful periods, nervousness, back pain or nausea. Rarely extra hair on body, trouble using contact lenses and spotty darkening of skin has occurred.
- Certain medications may make Nexplanon less effective so be sure to tell your provider about any medicines you are taking.

### Who can use Nexplanon?

Nexplanon is a safe birth control option for most healthy women however it is important to discuss your full medical history with your health provider before using the implant. It is not recommended if you :

- Are pregnant
- Have had breast cancer
- Have unexplained vaginal bleeding
- Have liver disease
- Have a history of severe depression
- Have a history of blood clots
- Are on certain medications such as barbiturates, griseofulvin, rifampin, phenylbutazone, phenytoin, carbamazepine, felbamate, oxcarbazepine, topiramate, modafinil, St. John's wort, anti-HIV protease inhibitors and antipsychotics.

8/15

References - Darney P, "Up to Date", "Etonogestrel Contraceptive Implant".