

Bleeding Problems with the Implant (September 2024)



Q. Will I have normal periods when using a contraceptive implant?

A. It is impossible to predict exactly how the contraceptive implant will affect your periods. Approximately 1 in 4 women will have no periods at all, which is entirely normal. It is common (1 in 2) to have irregular bleeding to begin with. This can include periods that are less frequent but irregular, or more frequent or longer lasting.

Q. Will any irregular bleeding last for long?

A. Approximately 5 in 10 women with more frequent bleeding will improve after three to six months of having the implant. The irregular bleeding may be equivalent to once a month (about one in three users) or less (about one in three users).

Mechanisms underlying irregular bleeding with progestogen-only contraception are incompletely understood.

Q. Should I talk to a doctor or nurse about any irregular bleeding I have with the implant?

A. If irregular bleeding concerns you speak to a doctor or nurse. You should also discuss your bleeding with a doctor or nurse if you develop irregular bleeding after a spell of regular bleeds or no bleeds.

Q. Will I need an examination or any tests if irregular bleeding continues?

A. In some situations there may be another cause for your irregular bleeding, such as a sexually transmitted infection. The doctor or nurse will ask you some questions and may wish to examine you and do some tests. This may include a sexual health screen or a cervical smear if this is due.

Q. Are there any treatments which may help with irregular bleeding?

A. If it is thought that the implant is the cause of your bleeding there are some options to try to help regulate the bleeding including:

- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) e.g. ibuprofen, mefenamic acid.
- Combined oral contraception (pill or patches, which contain both oestrogen and progestogen) which you would use continuously for 9 weeks.
- A progestogen-only pill daily for 12 weeks (this is an option for women who cannot have oestrogen).
- If irregular bleeding restarts, once you stop a short term course of one of these treatments, then using them for a longer length of time may be discussed with you. You may be able to continue using them along with the implant until the implant is due to be changed.
- Irregular bleeding may persist despite these treatments in some women.

Q. Can I get the implant removed if the irregular bleeding does not improve?

A. Yes if you would prefer it. Some women are happy to keep the implant in place despite irregular bleeding, once a doctor or nurse has confirmed there is no other cause for the bleeding pattern as it is a very effective contraceptive.

Q. I didn't have any irregular bleeding with my last contraceptive implant, can I expect to have bleeding when it is time for it to be replaced by a new one at 3 years?

A. It is possible that you may experience a change in your bleeding pattern with a new implant. If this persists for longer than 3 months following the change of your implant, you can discuss this with a doctor or nurse.