

# your guide to long-acting reversible contraception (LARC)

Helping you choose the method  
of contraception that is best for you



There are many different contraceptive methods available in the UK and you should choose one that suits you. This leaflet provides information about four methods that do not depend on you remembering to take or use them to be effective. The figures quoted in this leaflet for how well each method works are based on extensive independent research.

Visit [www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk) for more information about all contraceptive methods.

## Is contraception free and where can I go to get it?

You can obtain **free** contraception, including emergency contraception, from most general practices, a contraception or sexual health clinic, a young people's service (these have an upper age limit) and some genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinics.

## How do I find out about contraception services?

The Sexual Health Information Line provides confidential advice and information on all aspects of sexual health.

The number is **0800 567 123** and the service is available from Monday to Friday from 9am - 8pm and at weekends from 11am - 4pm.

For additional information on sexual health visit [www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk)

Information for young people can be found at [www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk)

## Clinics

To locate your closest clinic you can:

- Use Find a Clinic at [www.fpa.org.uk/clinics](http://www.fpa.org.uk/clinics)
- Download FPA's Find a Clinic app for iPhone or Android.

You can find details of general practices and pharmacies in England at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) and in Wales at [www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk). In Scotland you can find details of general practices at [www.nhs.24.com](http://www.nhs.24.com) and in Northern Ireland at [www.hscni.net](http://www.hscni.net)

## Emergency contraception

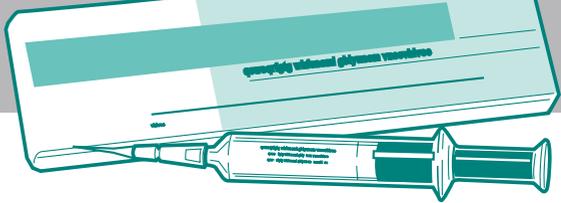
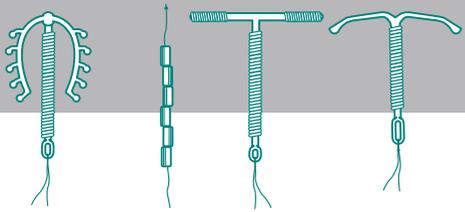
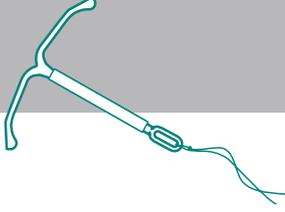
If you have had sex without contraception, or think your method might have failed, there are different types of emergency contraception you can use.

- The emergency contraceptive pill, Levonelle - can be taken up to three days (72 hours) after sex. It is more effective the earlier it is taken after sex. It is available with a prescription or to buy from a pharmacy.
- The emergency contraceptive pill, ellaOne - can be taken up to five days (120 hours) after sex. It is only available with a prescription.
- An IUD - can be fitted up to five days after sex, or up to five days after the earliest time you could have released an egg (ovulation).

Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about getting emergency pills in advance, just in case you need them.

## Sexually transmitted infections

Most methods of contraception do not protect you from sexually transmitted infections. Male and female condoms, when used correctly and consistently, can help protect against sexually transmitted infections. If you can, avoid using spermicidally lubricated condoms. The spermicide commonly contains a chemical called Nonoxinol 9, which does not protect against HIV and may even increase the risk of infection.

	 <b>Contraceptive implant</b>	 <b>Contraceptive injection</b>	 <b>Intrauterine device (IUD)</b>	 <b>Intrauterine system (IUS)</b>
Effectiveness	Over 99 per cent effective. Less than one woman in 1,000 will get pregnant over three years.	Over 99 per cent effective. Less than four women in 1,000 will get pregnant over two years.	Over 99 per cent effective. Less than two women in 100 will get pregnant over five years. Older IUDs have less copper and are less effective.	Over 99 per cent effective. Less than one woman in 100 will get pregnant over five years.
How it works	A small flexible rod is put under the skin of the upper arm. It releases the hormone progesterone. It stops ovulation, thickens cervical mucus to stop sperm reaching an egg, and thins the lining of the uterus (womb) to prevent a fertilised egg implanting.	It releases the hormone progesterone which stops ovulation, thickens cervical mucus to prevent sperm reaching an egg, and thins the lining of the uterus to prevent a fertilised egg implanting.	A small plastic and copper device is put into the uterus. It stops sperm reaching an egg, and may also stop a fertilised egg implanting in the uterus.	A small, T-shaped plastic device, which releases the hormone progesterone, is put into the uterus. This thins the lining of the uterus to prevent a fertilised egg implanting, thickens cervical mucus to prevent sperm reaching an egg, and may stop ovulation.
How long it lasts	Works for three years but can be taken out sooner.	Lasts for 12 weeks (Depo-Provera) or eight weeks (Noristerat), or 13 weeks (Sayana Press).	Can stay in 5–10 years depending on type but can be taken out sooner.	Works for five years but can be taken out sooner.
How it affects periods	Your periods may stop, be irregular or longer.	Your periods may stop, be irregular or longer.	Your periods may be heavier or longer or more painful.	Your periods usually become lighter, shorter and sometimes less painful. They may stop altogether.
How it affects fertility	When the implant is removed your fertility will return to normal.	Your periods and fertility may take time to return after you stop using the injection.	When the IUD is removed your fertility will return to normal.	When the IUS is removed your fertility will return to normal.
How it is inserted/removed	A doctor or nurse numbs your skin in the inner area of your upper arm with a local anaesthetic and inserts the implant. It takes a few minutes and feels similar to having an injection. To remove it, the doctor or nurse uses a local anaesthetic, makes a tiny cut and gently pulls the implant out.	Depo-Provera is injected into a muscle, usually your buttocks. It can also be injected into the arm. Noristerat is a thicker solution so may be more painful to receive. Sayana Press is injected into the front of the thigh or abdomen. The injection cannot be removed from the body so any side-effects may continue for as long as it works and for some time afterwards.	A doctor or nurse will insert the IUD. This takes 10–15 minutes. It can be uncomfortable or painful and you may want to use a local anaesthetic. The IUD has one or two threads which hang through the opening of the uterus. A doctor or nurse can remove the IUD by pulling gently on the threads.	A doctor or nurse will insert the IUS. This takes 10–15 minutes. It can be uncomfortable or painful and you may want to use a local anaesthetic. The IUS has two threads which hang through the opening of the uterus. A doctor or nurse can remove the IUS by pulling gently on its threads.

## A final word

This booklet can only give you general information. The information is based on evidence-guided research from the World Health Organisation and The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence guidance.

All methods of contraception come with a Patient Information Leaflet which provides detailed information about the method. Remember - contact your doctor, practice nurse or a sexual health clinic if you are worried or unsure about anything.



talking sense about sex



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

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If you would like the information on the evidence used to produce this booklet or would like to provide us with feedback about this booklet email [feedback@fpa.org.uk](mailto:feedback@fpa.org.uk)

