Facts About Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC): IUD and Implant

What is a LONG ACTING REVERSIBLE CONTRACEPTION LARC?

There are two types of LARCs. It can be an Intrauterine Device (IUD) or it can be the Birth Control Implant.

An Intrauterine Device (IUD) is a small T-shaped device made of soft, flexible plastic.

A trained provider places the IUD into the uterus. There are two types: one made with copper (it contains no hormones) and one made with hormones similar to the birth control pill.

The copper IUD works by causing the uterine lining to change and makes the sperm move slowly preventing fertilization of the egg. It can be used up to 10 years.

The hormonal IUD, which can be used for up to 3 to 5 years, works in three ways. It keeps the body from releasing an egg that could be fertilized by a man’s sperm. It also causes changes to the cervical mucus making it more difficult for sperm to enter the uterus and keeps a fertilized egg from attaching to the uterus.

A Birth Control Implant is a single flexible rod about the size of a matchstick that is inserted under the skin in the upper arm. It releases hormones into the body. It can be used for up to 3 years.

How well do LARCs work?
The IUD and the implant are the most effective forms of reversible birth control available. All LARCs are 99% effective in preventing pregnancy. Over the long term, LARC methods are more effective than birth control pills, the patch or the ring.

Why is a LARC a good choice for me?

- No one can tell that you are using birth control and it does not interfere with sex or daily activities.
- It can be inserted immediately after a pregnancy termination, a miscarriage, childbirth and while breastfeeding or after pregnancy has been ruled out.
- All women, including adolescents, can get an IUD, even if they have never had children.
- If you wish to become pregnant or if you want to stop using it, you can have the LARC removed.
- The hormonal IUD or implant may help to decrease menstrual pain and heavy menstrual bleeding.
- The copper IUD also is the most effective form of emergency contraception (EC).
Will I have any problems if I use a LARC?

Most women do not have many problems using an IUD or implant. You may have some spotting or irregular bleeding, headaches, nausea, breast tenderness, depression or mood changes, or acne. If using a hormonal IUD and signs or symptoms of a pelvic infection develop such as severe pain, excessive bleeding, fever, etc., call your doctor or clinic.

Smoking increases your risk of serious side effects. Women who use birth control methods with hormones should not smoke. This includes electronic cigarettes.

Copper IUD: Some women may have some cramping and bleeding. The cramping and bleeding may decrease within 1 year of use.

REMEMBER:

- LARCs do not protect you from STIs (sexually transmitted infections) or HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) you can get when you have sex. To protect yourself, use a latex or vinyl condom every time you have oral, vaginal or anal sex.
- Back up contraception may be needed for the hormonal IUDs and birth control implant depending on time of insertion.