

What You Should Know about Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives

There are a wide range of family planning and birth control options available for women. Among these options are long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs). LARCs are a safe and effective choice for preventing pregnancy, and they are available through the Healthy Texas Women program at no cost to eligible women.

What are LARCs?

LARCs are very effective types of long-term birth control methods. There are two types of LARCs:

Intrauterine devices (IUDs) — These are small, t-shaped devices that are inserted in the uterus by a doctor or other healthcare provider. IUDs can remain in place and prevent pregnancy for three to 10 years, depending on the type. Some women may experience mild discomfort during the insertion; taking over the counter pain medicine before the procedure may help. There are two different types of IUDs that you can use to prevent pregnancy:

- Hormonal IUDs release progestin, which is a hormone that helps prevent pregnancy.
- Non-hormonal IUDs are made of copper, which is safe and effective in preventing pregnancy.



Implant — This is a small thin, flexible plastic rod that is inserted under the skin of the upper arm by a doctor or other healthcare provider, and can prevent pregnancy for up to three years. A local anesthetic is applied to the skin before insertion. No incision is made in the skin and the procedure takes only a few minutes.

What are the benefits of LARCs?

Women with a LARC do not have to worry about taking a daily pill or having another form of birth control available. Some other benefits may include:

- LARCs are safe and convenient for women of all ages.
- LARCs can be inserted immediately after childbirth, including for women who are breastfeeding.
- Once it is placed, nothing else needs to be done to prevent pregnancy.
- It does not interfere with sex and will not come out during sex or with tampon use.
- Many women experience lighter periods.
- It can be removed at any time by a doctor or healthcare provider if you decide you want to become pregnant or use a different method of birth control

What are the potential side effects of LARCs?

Side effects will vary, with many women experiencing no side effects. However, some women may experience spotting or irregular bleeding. With the implant and hormonal IUD, some women may also have headaches, acne or depression.

It is important to know that while LARCs prevent pregnancy, they do not protect you against human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

How can I find more information about LARCs?

You should talk with your doctor or other healthcare provider about LARCs to see if this option will work for you.

You also can learn more about LARCs and other family planning services and birth control options at www.HealthyTexasWomen.org.