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Long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs)

Long-acting reversible contraceptives are very effective birth control methods. When you use one of these, you do not have to rely on remembering something every day. They last between 2 months and 10 years, depending on the option used. They may come in the form of injections, implants, and also devices which are placed in your womb (uterus).

What are the long-acting reversible contraceptive choices?

There are four types of long-acting reversible contraception (LARC).

- **The contraceptive implant.** A minor procedure under local anaesthetic is needed to insert the small, rod-shaped implant under the skin in your upper arm, where it remains. The implant releases a progestogen hormone. Each implant lasts three years. Read about the [contraceptive implant](#).
- **The contraceptive injection.** An injection of a progestogen hormone is given every three months (two months for one brand), most commonly into the muscle in your bottom. Read about the [contraceptive injection](#).
- **The intrauterine contraceptive device (IUCD).** This is also known as 'the coil'. It sits inside the womb (uterus) and, once fitted, can stay in your womb for up to ten years. The device is called a coil because in the 1960s some devices were coil-shaped. Read about the [intrauterine contraceptive device](#).
- **The intrauterine system (IUS).** This is a specific type of IUCD which releases a progestogen hormone into the womb. It can last for up to five years. Read about the [intrauterine system \(IUS\)](#).

Why would I choose long-acting reversible contraception?

LARCs are ideal for women who do not want a baby in the near future. This might be because you think you have completed your family and don't want more children, but want to keep your options open. Or it might be because you are young and not wishing to have children for some years to come. Or because you don't want children at all. Or because you are not currently in a position to have children, because of your job, relationship or finances. The great thing about LARCs is the word "reversible" - so if your situation changes, you can stop using them and become fertile again.

You don't need to take a tablet every day, so for most LARCs, you can forget about contraception for years at a time. This makes them more reliable (as they don't need you to remember, other than when they are due to be replaced).

The main downside is that they all require a small procedure of some sort. However, this does not have to be done very often, and provides long-term, reliable contraception once you have done it.

Which LARC should I choose?

This is an individual choice. Different people will prefer different options. [Pros and cons of each are weighed up in the separate leaflet called Contraception Methods](#), and there is plenty of information about each in their individual leaflets as linked above.

Further reading

- [Long-acting reversible contraception](#); NICE Clinical Guideline (October 2005 - updated July 2019)
- [Trussell J](#); Contraceptive failure in the United States, *Contraception*, 2011
- [Intrauterine Contraception](#); Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare Clinical Effectiveness Unit (March 2023 - last updated July 2023)
- [UK Medical Eligibility Criteria Summary Table for intrauterine and hormonal contraception](#); Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare, 2016 - amended September 2019
- [Contraception - Progestogen-only methods](#); NICE CKS, September 2022 (UK access only)

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Originally Published: 19/11/2023	Next review date: 10/02/2023	Document ID: doc_29541

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