An implant is a small flexible rod that is placed just under your skin in your upper arm. It releases a progestogen hormone similar to the natural progesterone that women produce in their ovaries and works for up to three years.

How effective is an implant?
How effective any contraceptive is depends on how old you are, how often you have sex and whether you follow the instructions.

If 100 sexually active women don’t use any contraception, 80 to 90 will become pregnant in a year. The implant is over 99 per cent effective. Less than one woman in every 1,000 will get pregnant over three years. The implant is a method of long-acting reversible contraception (LARC). All LARC is very effective because while it is being used you do not have to remember to take or use contraception.

How does an implant work?
The main way it works is to stop your ovaries releasing an egg each month (ovulation). It also:
- Thickens the mucus from your cervix. This makes it difficult for sperm to move through your cervix and reach an egg.
- Makes the lining of your uterus (womb) thinner so it is less likely to accept a fertilised egg.

Where can I get an implant?
Only a doctor or nurse who has been trained to fit implants can insert the implant. You can go to a contraception or sexual health clinic or to the doctor or nurse at a general practice. All treatment is free and confidential (see Where can I get more information and advice? on page 10).

Can anyone use an implant?
Most women can have an implant fitted. The doctor or nurse will need to ask you about your own and your family’s medical history to make sure that the implant is suitable. You should tell them about any illnesses or operations you have had. An implant may not be suitable for you if:
- you think you might already be pregnant
- you do not want your periods to change
- you take certain medicines.
You have now, or had in the past:
- arterial disease or history of serious heart disease or stroke
- disease of the liver
- breast cancer or breast cancer within the last five years
- unexplained vaginal bleeding (for example, bleeding between periods or after sex)
- systemic lupus erythematosus.

What are the advantages of an implant?
• It works for three years.
• You can use it if you are breast-feeding.
• Your fertility will return to normal as soon as the implant is taken out.
• It may reduce heavy, painful periods.

Some other headings
What are the disadvantages of an implant?
Are there any risks?
When can I start using an one?
I’ve just had a baby. Can I use one?
Can I use an implant after a miscarriage or abortion?
How is an implant put in?
How is an implant taken out?
Can anything make an implant less effective?
How will it affect my periods?
What should I do if I want to stop using the implant or try to get pregnant?

For further information see:
www.fpa.org.uk