

# Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC)

## Brown Health Services Patient Education Series

### What are Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives?

Long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) are plastic birth control devices that prevent pregnancy for several years. You don't need to think about or plan for birth control as long as the device is in your body.

The LARC family includes hormonal intrauterine devices (IUDs), the copper IUD, and the hormonal implant.

IUDs are small, plastic, T-shaped devices that are inserted into the uterus through the vagina.


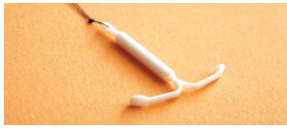
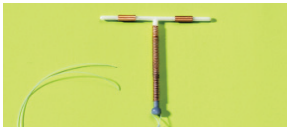
The birth control implant is a matchstick-sized flexible plastic rod that is implanted under the skin of the upper arm.



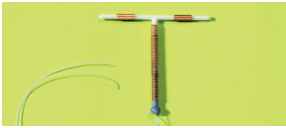
LARCs are more than 99% effective at preventing pregnancy, making them the most effective form of birth control. They do not protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

LARCs are very safe, convenient, and private. They are easy to use and don't interfere with sex.

LARCs, including IUDs, can be placed even if you have never used contraception or have been pregnant before. They can be used if you have certain conditions that prevent you from taking estrogen-containing birth control.

Your LARC can be removed by a medical provider at any time.

	Progestin Implant (Nexplanon)	Progestin IUD (Mirena, Kyleena, Skyla, Liletta)	Copper IUD (Paragard)
			
Does it contain hormones?	Yes, progestin only (no estrogen)		No
How does it work?	Stops the body from releasing an egg. Thickens cervical mucus, making it hard for sperm to reach an egg.	Thickens cervical mucus, making it hard for sperm to reach an egg. Thins the lining of the uterus.	Copper makes it hard for sperm to move. Makes the uterus a hostile environment for a pregnancy to grow.
How long can I use it?	3-5 years*	Mirena: 5-7 years* Kyleena: 5 years Skyla: 3 years Liletta: 5 years	10-12 years*

	<b>Progestin Implant (Nexplanon)</b>	<b>Progestin IUD (Mirena, Kyleena, Skyla, Liletta)</b>	<b>Copper IUD (Paragard)</b>
			
<b>Benefits</b>	Insertion does not require a vaginal exam The implant is mostly invisible to others, but can be felt under the skin	Can decrease heavy periods, cramps, and PMS	Does not contain hormones, which is attractive to some people Works as emergency contraception (within 5 days after unprotected sex)
<b>Side effects</b>	May cause hard to predict changes in your period. Periods may be lighter, heavier, or go away. You may have frequent spotting.	Periods may become lighter or disappear. Losing your period is more likely with Mirena and Liletta, and least likely with Skyla.	Causes periods to be heavier, crampier, and last longer.
<b>How is it inserted?</b>	After numbing the skin, the implant is inserted under the skin of the upper arm.	Your provider will perform a pelvic exam and place a speculum into the vagina. The provider will then insert the IUD into the uterus. You will be instructed to take certain medicines before the procedure, like ibuprofen, to help with pain and cramping.	
<b>Does it hurt to get placed?</b>	Sometimes the numbing medicine can cause a burning sensation. When the implant is inserted, you should feel pressure but not sharp pain.	The procedure can cause cramping or discomfort. Keep in mind that pain tolerance and pain perception are different from person to person.	
<b>How is it removed?</b>	After numbing the skin, a provider will make a small incision at the tip of the implant to remove the device.	After placing a speculum, a provider will grasp the strings of the IUD and remove it.	

*\*Note: Lower ends of the time range indicates how long the device was initially approved for by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). These devices have been studied and proven to work for longer than the initial approval. It is safe and effective to keep the device for the high end of the range.*