

Long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) are safe, effective option

December 20 2016, by Olivia Mccoy

Long-acting reversible contraceptives are the most effective form of reversible birth control but not the most commonly used. Misconceptions and outdated misinformation prevent many people from realizing the benefits of intrauterine devices (IUDs), contraceptive implants and the birth control shot. While use of these contraceptives has increased over time, they are still very underutilized.

IUDs are small devices that are placed inside the uterus. There are several varieties of IUDs, some containing hormones and some without. These various devices can prevent pregnancy for different amounts of time, typically between three and 12 years. The [contraceptive implant](#) is a small rod placed under the skin in the upper arm and can prevent pregnancy for up to three years. The Depo Provera contraceptive shot is effective for three months before another shot needs to be administered.

One common misconception about LARCs is in regard to their safety. Not only are LARCs very effective, they are also very safe. There are very few [women](#) for whom using LARCs would not be an option. Additionally, LARCs are safe for use in adolescents, young women and women who have not had children. Of course, it's important to speak with your [health care provider](#) about personal and sexual health history, and to ask about symptoms that could be cause for concern.

Another misconception surrounding LARCs is that they have a detrimental effect on future fertility. Research has shown about 71 percent of women who wanted to become pregnant conceived within 12

months of removing IUDs; that is comparable to the general population. It is important to talk to your provider about personal goals regarding future pregnancy; this will impact the type of contraception that is best for you.

Finally, LARCs are the most effective form of reversible contraception on the market; less than one percent of users will become pregnant. Pregnancy occurs in up to 18 percent of women who use condoms as their primary method of birth control and in about 9 percent of women using oral contraception. This often occurs because of inconsistent or incorrect use. Because LARCs don't require women to remember anything on a daily, weekly or monthly basis and require a visit to a health care provider for removal, they prevent user error which often occurs with other forms of contraception.

About 50 percent of all pregnancies in the United States are unintended. It is important that we provide information and access to the safest and most effective forms of [birth control](#). LARCs can provide safety and security for most women, and should be considered along with other forms of [contraception](#).

Provided by University of Kentucky

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