VALLEYHEALTH

Your Guide to Long-Acting Birth Control

Long-acting birth control methods are safe, effective, and easy to use. They're often called 'set it and forget it' options because they work for years without needing daily attention. This guide explains how they work and helps you decide if one might be a good fit for you.

What Is Long-Acting Birth Control?

These methods are known as long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs). That means they last a long time but can be removed if you want to stop or get pregnant. The two main types are:

IUD (Intrauterine Device): A small device placed in the uterus. Some have hormones, and others don't.

Implant (Nexplanon): A tiny rod placed under the skin of your upper arm that releases hormones.

How Do They Work?

IUDs with hormones stop pregnancy by thickening cervical mucus and thinning the lining of the uterus.

Copper IUDs don't use hormones—they stop sperm from reaching an egg.

Implants release hormones that prevent ovulation (the release of eggs).

How Long Do They Last?

- **Copper IUD:** Up to 10 years
- **Hormonal IUDs (like Mirena):** Up to 8 years
- **Other hormonal IUDs:** 3 to 5 years
- **Nexplanon Implant:** 3 years

Who Can Use Them?

LARCs are a great choice for most women, including those who:

- Want long-term birth control
- Don't want to remember a daily pill
- Have never had children or already have children

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They may not be right if you:

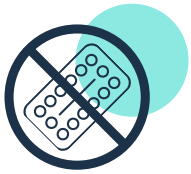
- Are currently pregnant
- Have certain types of cancer
- Have uterine abnormalities
- Have a current pelvic infection

Always talk to your doctor to see what's best for you.

Pros and Cons of Long-Acting Birth Control

Pros:

- Very effective and low maintenance
- No daily pills or frequent appointments
- Can help with heavy or painful periods (hormonal IUDs)
- Easily removed if you change your mind



Cons:

- Requires a doctor visit for insertion and removal.
- May cause some discomfort during placement.
- Hormonal options can have side effects like mood changes or spotting.

What to Expect

- Your doctor will talk to you about options and check insurance coverage.
- The insertion is done in the office and usually takes just a few minutes.
- If you ever want it removed, that can also be done easily at your doctor's office.

Long-acting birth control is a safe, effective, and convenient option. Whether you're starting birth control or exploring new methods, it's important to choose what fits your lifestyle best.

For more information or to talk through your options, contact Valley Health —we're here to help.