New contraceptive implant for American women? [1]

Dear Alice,

I read in a magazine while I was pregnant that a new form of Norplant, with a new name, would become available in January of 2004. I was pregnant at the time and neglected to write down the name... now that I have given birth to my daughter, I would like to consider that for my birth control method, as I have had Norplant before and found it to be a great method for me with no side effects. Do you know the new name?

Answer

Dear Reader,

As you know, Norplant [2] was a progestin-only contraceptive method that was implanted into a woman's arm. In 2002, Norplant was taken off the market in the United States. Since then, doctors no longer implant Norplant's tiny rods, although they will obviously still remove them. Many American women valued the long-term (5 years) pregnancy protection that Norplant provided and have eagerly awaited a new contraceptive implant. Recently two similar, but not identical, implant systems have received U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval. However, there are currently plans to sell only one in the U.S.

Implanon is a contraceptive implant similar to Norplant. Instead of six tiny capsules being implanted under the skin of a woman's arm (as was the case with Norplant), Implanon consists of only one tiny (about 1.5 inches by 0.08 inches) rod. This rod slowly releases the hormone etonogestrel, providing long-term (3 years) pregnancy protection. While Implanon is currently only available in Europe, the FDA recently approved its use in the U.S. Implanon is now on the market in the US. For more information on this method of contraception, please see New contraception: Implanon? [3] in Alice's Sexual Health archive.

Wyeth, the same company that marketed Norplant in the U.S., owns the rights to Jadelle, another new contraceptive implant. Jadelle, often referred to as "Norplant 2," is owned by the same company that owns Norplant. Similar to Norplant, Jadelle provides long-lasting and highly effective protection against pregnancy. Clinical trials have shown Jadelle has a failure rate [4] of 0.3 percent over three years and 1.1 percent over 5 years of use. Unlike Norplant, however, Jadelle uses only two tiny rods (each 1.7 inches long and 0.09 inches in diameter), rather than Norplant's six. Because there are fewer components, Jadelle is easier to insert and remove surgically than Norplant.

The Jadelle rods, made of silicone, contain a slow releasing synthetic progestin called levonorgestrel. If insertion occurs during the first week of a woman's menstrual cycle,
protection from pregnancy occurs within 24 hours. A back-up method of birth control needs to be used during those 24 hours or for seven days if Jadelle is not inserted during the first week of a woman's menstrual cycle.

The most common side effect reported with use of Jadelle is a change in menstrual bleeding patterns. Other side effects can be similar to those experienced by women who use birth control pills [5]. Though Jadelle received FDA approval in 1996, it is only available in Europe. Unfortunately, Wyeth currently has no plans to make Jadelle available in the U.S. Best of luck making your birth control choices,

Alice!

Related questions

An explanation of condom failure rates [7]
Implanon and Nexplanon: The contraceptive implant [8]
Implanon and bleeding between periods [9]

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