

Needing an abortion motivates many women to want to start a contraceptive method that will help them successfully avoid future unintended pregnancies. Implanon™ is a single-rod implant that uses progestin alone to provide highly effective contraception for up to three years. We investigated whether women would like to receive the contraceptive implant immediately after having an abortion, whether it was comfortable and convenient for them, and whether they continued to use the implant a year later. We also checked whether having the implant placed at the time of abortion changed their bleeding compared to women not using hormonal birth control.

Based on our preliminary analysis, we found that the 64 women we studied were extremely pleased with having the implant placed immediately after abortion (93% were “satisfied or very satisfied”). They had almost no pain from the insertion regardless of what type of pain medicine they had received (1.0 with moderate sedation and local anesthesia vs. 1.2 with local alone, when “1” meant “no pain” on a 10-point pain scale). Bleeding during the first month after the abortion was only changed slightly for the women receiving the implant compared to women receiving no hormonal birth control. Only in the last week of the month following their abortion did women with the implant have more bleeding or spotting days. This matches the most commonly noted side effect of the implant, which is that it changes women’s menstrual bleeding patterns to make bleeding more unpredictable.

Although we have not finished interviewing all of the women who received the implant in our study, one final way in which women showed that most were very satisfied with the contraceptive method was the relatively large number who had continued using the implant after one year. Of the 27 women we have reached so far, two thirds (19, or 68%) were still using this highly effective form of contraception a year after their abortions. In summary, post-abortion contraceptive implant placement is highly acceptable and comfortable, with good continuation rates after a year and with only small effects on the first month of post-abortion bleeding.