

DOES CONCOMITANT USE OF COMBINED ORAL HORMONAL STEROIDS STOP BLEEDING IN WOMEN USING ETONOGESTREL IMPLANTS (IMPLANON/NEXPLANON®)? A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED STUDY

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The most common complaint from women using the etonorgestrel contraceptive implant (Nexplanon®/Implanon®) is bothersome bleeding. This is also the leading cause of discontinuation of this very effective method of contraception prior to its recommended 3 year use time period. In our study, we aimed to see if a short course (14 days) of a combined oral contraceptive pills taken by participants would stop a prolonged, bothersome bleeding episode. We enrolled women who reported at least 7 days of continuous bleeding and divided them up equally to receive either the oral birth control pills or a placebo pill. The division was done in a way that neither the participant nor the research assistant or physicians knew which pill was received and taken. We asked the participants to take the pill daily at the same time of day for 2 weeks. During this time we also asked them to keep a daily diary of their bleeding pattern and report it as none, spotting, light bleeding, normal, or heavy. If the participant stopped bleeding during the 14 day period, we asked them to continue recording their bleeding experience until they bled again.

Upon examining the information we received from the study, we found that women who received the oral contraceptive pills were more likely to stop bleeding, stop bleeding in a shorter amount of time, and have a sustained episode without bleeding for the remainder of the 2 weeks when compared to the women who received the placebo pills. Most participants who stopped bleeding while receiving the contraceptive pills, had another bleeding episode within 2 weeks. We believe that using combined oral contraceptive pills offers an easy, affordable option for women experiencing bothersome bleeding with the etonorgestrel contraceptive implant.