NORPLANT is a convenient new family planning option for women, effective up to 5 years.

This Guide to Norplant Counseling will help you, the family planning provider, tell your clients about Norplant. It also will enable you to help your clients decide if Norplant is the best method for them. Of course, other family planning methods should be offered along with Norplant, and the client should make the choice.

Counseling is a step-by-step discussion between you (the provider) and the client. Counseling helps the client choose and use the family planning method that best suits the client's needs. The letters in the word GATHER stand for the steps in counseling.

G = Greet clients
A = Ask clients about themselves
T = Tell clients about all available methods
H = Help clients choose a method
E = Explain how to use that method
R = Return for follow-up should be planned

Norplant capsules are made of flexible tubing. This photo shows their actual size. A hormone in the capsules prevents pregnancy for up to 5 years.
GREET clients politely. Ask how you can help.

ASK clients about themselves to find out their family planning needs and concerns.

TELL clients these facts about Norplant:
- Norplant is a set of six small soft capsules placed under the skin of a woman's upper arm.
- Norplant prevents pregnancy very well for up to 5 years, especially for women who weigh less than 70 kg.
- Fertility will return soon after the capsules are taken out.
- No known serious side effects.
- Most Norplant users have some change in monthly bleeding—more bleeding, irregular bleeding, or no bleeding. All these patterns are safe.
- Other side effects include vaginal discharge, headaches, change of appetite, and either hair loss or hair growth. These side effects do not damage a woman's health. Most women never have any of these side effects.
- If the client needs to protect herself against AIDS, she should use condoms whether or not she chooses Norplant.

HELP clients choose a method that suits them.

REASONS FOR CHOOSING NORPLANT:
- Norplant works up to 5 years but also lets the client become pregnant after the capsules are taken out.
- No pill to remember every day.
- Nothing to remember when she has sex.
- More effective than pills without some of the side effects.
- A breastfeeding woman can start Norplant 6 weeks after giving birth.

REASONS FOR CHOOSING ANOTHER METHOD:
- Client wants to get pregnant soon.
- Client finds changes in monthly bleeding hard to accept.

REASONS FOR A CLIENT TO SEE A NURSE OR DOCTOR BEFORE USING NORPLANT:
- Pregnancy. Has she had no monthly bleeding in the last 6 weeks?
- Liver disease. Does she have abnormally yellow skin or eyes?
- Cancer of the reproductive organs. Has she had bleeding between regular monthly periods or after sex?
- Breast cancer. Does she have lumps in her breasts?
- Cardiovascular disease or heart disease. Does she have blood clots in the legs, lungs, or eyes? Is she short of breath after mild exercise? Does she have swollen legs or ankles, severe chest or leg pains, severe headache, or blurred vision?

REASONS FOR A CLIENT TO SEE A NURSE OR DOCTOR REGULARLY WHILE USING NORPLANT:
- Diabetes (sugar in the urine)
- Taking medicine for epilepsy (seizures)
- Migraine headaches
EXPLAIN how to use Norplant.

INSERTION
- A trained health care provider puts in the capsules.
- Norplant can be put in at any time as long as the woman is not pregnant—for example, within 7 days after the start of menstruation, immediately after abortion, or any time if the woman has been using another effective method. Norplant also can be started as soon as 6 weeks after childbirth.
- Putting in capsules takes about 10 minutes.
- All six capsules are slid under the skin through one tiny cut. No stitches are needed.
- The woman is awake while the capsules are put in and taken out. Local anesthetic prevents pain.
- There may be a bruise and her arm may be sore for a few days after the capsules are put in.
- The cut, where the capsules were put in, should be kept clean and dry until it heals.

DURING USE
- The capsules stay where they are placed.
- Changes in monthly bleeding patterns are normal and safe.
- Norplant is effective within a few hours after the capsules are put in.
- Any side effects should decrease after several months.

REMOVAL
- Norplant must be taken out after 5 years. The client may have the capsules removed sooner.
- If a woman wants, she may have a new set of Norplant capsules put in.
- A specially trained provider should take out the capsules.
- Taking out implants requires a small cut in the arm. The woman is awake while the capsules are taken out. Local anesthetic prevents pain.
- Taking out implants takes longer than putting them in.

RETURN for follow-up should be planned.

TELL THE CLIENT WHERE TO COME FOR ROUTINE FOLLOW-UP...
- About one month after insertion and
- After 5 years to have the capsules removed.

TELL THE CLIENT TO COME BACK AT ANY TIME...
- If she decides to have Norplant taken out.
- If she has questions.
- If she is moving and needs the address of a Norplant provider in her new area.
- If certain signs occur. Explain these signs. She can use the letters of the word DISCUSS, or of another word in her language, to remind her of these signs.
  - Delay in monthly bleeding after regular cycles,
  - Infection where the capsules were inserted,
  - Severe pain in the lower belly,
  - Capsule comes out,
  - Unusually heavy vaginal bleeding,
  - Soreness in the arm after the first few days,
  - Severe headaches or blurred vision.

For a full explanation of the “GATHER” counseling process, see Population Reports, Counseling Guide, J-36, December 1987.

Sources: Population Council (150), Johns Hopkins Program for International Education in Reproductive Health (97), Program for International Training in Health (94).

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Write for more copies of this Counseling Guide.

A specially trained health care provider places the six small Norplant capsules just under the skin of a woman’s upper arm (see drawing below). A local anesthetic prevents pain, and the woman stays awake during the procedure.