

# Jean Hailes research



## Long-acting reversible contraception (LARC)

**Few Australian women use long-acting reversible contraception (LARC), despite its convenience and effectiveness.**

A new study has investigated attitudes to the perceived reliability and consideration of use of two types of LARC – implants and intrauterine devices (IUDs) – among Australian women and men of reproductive age.

In Australia the main methods of contraception are the oral contraceptive pill (OCP), condoms, as well as more permanent methods such as tubal ligation and vasectomy.

“LARCs are only used by about 3% of women in Australia”, says Jean Hailes Research Fellow Dr Sara Holton. “In the UK and US this figure is around 8-10%, with data from the US showing women who used it being satisfied with their choice, with high continuation rates.”

LARCs are long acting reversible contraceptives that provide effective contraception, don't

require users to do anything else to prevent pregnancy, and fertility returns to normal when stopped. They are suitable for all women including young women, post baby and during perimenopause.

“The advantages of these contraceptives include: not having to worry about taking a pill each day, not having to get a prescription filled, no ongoing cost, and reversibility”, says Dr Holton.

“Women may not be choosing LARC simply because they are not familiar with them or they may perceive cost as a downside to using them. While there is an upfront cost, there are no ongoing costs to this ‘fit and forget’ contraception”, she says.

“US research found there were many misconceptions among potential users about side effects, suitability and cost.

It also found that health care providers lacked knowledge about LARC, which didn't give women the confidence to seriously consider LARC as an option.”

According to Dr Holton the next step is to develop interventions targeted at particular groups to increase their knowledge of and familiarity with LARC, allowing women to make fully informed choices about which contraceptives are best for them and their individual circumstances.

The study, Understanding Fertility Management in Contemporary Australia, is a partnership between the Jean Hailes Research Unit, Family Planning Victoria, the Royal Women's Hospital, Melbourne IVF and the Victorian Department of Health.