

Newest form of birth control now available at Student Health

By Kimberly Perry
Staff Writer

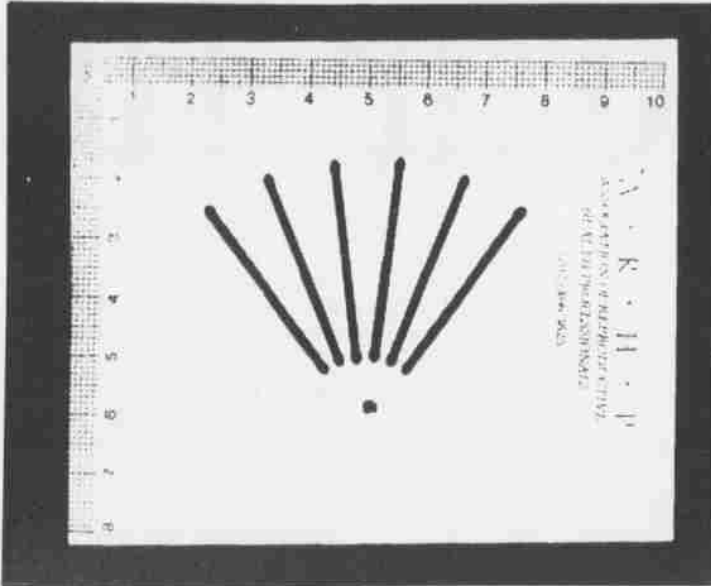
It is six rods inserted just under the skin of the upper arm in a fan-like shape to release a hormone like a time-release cold capsule. It is Norplant, the newest form of birth control, now available to women from Student Health Service since the beginning of fall semester.

Three University students have chosen the Norplant method through SHS this semester, said Peggy Norton, a UNC family nurse practitioner. Two students are considering the option, one student was not allowed to receive the method because of weight restrictions and another is trying to lose weight, she said.

A candidate for Norplant cannot weigh more than 154 pounds because progestin, the synthetic hormone in Norplant, cannot be absorbed enough to protect a woman over that limit from pregnancy.

Norplant is an effective, reversible, five-year, low dose progestin-only contraceptive for women, according to an information sheet from the gynecological division of SHS.

The rods containing progestin provide contraception within 24 hours when inserted during the first seven days of the menstrual cycle. If insertion is done in the middle of the cycle, a back-up method should be used until the next menstrual period.



Student Health doctors use this card to position Norplant on women's upper arms

Norplant works in two ways. It can suppress ovulation or thicken the cervical mucus and prevent sperm penetration. The average annual pregnancy rate during a five-year period is less than 1 percent with Norplant.

Dawn Morgado, a senior international studies and pre-med major, spent spring

semester researching Norplant at the International Training and Health Center, affiliated with UNC Hospitals.

Morgado observed while doctors performed a Norplant procedure in April as part of certification at UNC Hospitals. "It was mentioned that a volunteer was pregnant and could not (have Norplant inserted). In about 1.5 seconds, I thought how I was planning on

doing it anyway, it was being done from someone I knew and it would not cost anything." She switched from observer to volunteer and left the hospital with her own Norplant.

Morgado said this was not a common occurrence. "I studied (Norplant) intensely and (the doctors) knew I knew what I was doing. It provides long-term, efficient contraceptive benefits without side effects," she said.

Good candidates for Norplant are those women who suffer from the side effects of estrogen, contained in most birth control pills but not present in Norplant, or those who cannot remember to take the birth control pill, Norton said.

Since progestin comes in a low dose in Norplant, Norton said the progestin does not adversely affect cholesterol level and causes few side effects.

Norton said side effects were worse in the first six to nine months. The biggest problem with Norplant is breakthrough bleeding, she said. Norplant is more effective when a woman is not having a regular period. With regular periods a woman is more likely to get

pregnant because she has more ovulatory cycles, she said.

Morgado said she experienced irregular bleeding for six to eight months and now no longer has a period. With a Norplant, "it is not bad (for a woman's health) to not have a period," Morgado said. "It is bogus to say that it is natural to have a period every 28 days. It does not mean that you are infertile."

When women use Norplant, 33 percent have a regular period, 33 percent have irregular bleeding and 33 percent have no period at all, Norton said.

The SHS charges \$355 for the Norplant operation, Norton said. The cost of the Norplant kit is \$350 for any health service that wants to provide the operation. The remaining \$5 is for pharmacy fees. Once all six doctors have performed a supervised insertion, the price will be raised \$95, making it a total of \$450. Prices in the Triangle range from \$500 to \$780, Norton said.

Morgado said if a woman did use Norplant for the full five years, it was more cost efficient than the birth control pill. "It's not cost efficient if you do not know that you want it for five years,"

she said.

With the cost of a birth control pill pack being a minimum of \$8 per month for students for four years, the cost would be \$384, Morgado said. For the fifth year without subsidized student prices, a year's worth of pills would cost \$228. The total is \$612, \$162 more than a Norplant operation, she said.

Norplant's price is increased by the cost of malpractice coverage, Morgado said. "We are in a litigious society."

She said another reason for Norplant's cost was that each Norplant kit necessarily came with new instruments. "(Doctors) do not need new instruments each time, but can sterilize them," she said.

The Norplant operation takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes, Norton said. "I can't see charging an arm and a leg for it. It's got to be reasonable."

She said that bruising occurs in the first three weeks. "It takes a lot of muscle power to put (Norplant) in."

Morgado said, "I am extremely pain sensitive, and it didn't hurt."

See NORPLANT, page 5

Campus Calendar

TUESDAY
12:15 p.m. TARP will sponsor a can-crush in the Pit. Come cheer for your professors or class!
12:30 p.m. Minority Career Fair will be held in the Great Hall in the Student Union.
2 p.m. Students Older Than Average will have a "brown bag" lunch in 210 Union.
5 p.m. English Conversation Partner's reception for international students and their sponsor parents will be held in the Battle House. Questions? Call 962-5661.
The Juggling Club will meet at the flag pole in front of Wilson Library. Rain location: Carmichael Ballroom.
5:30 p.m. UNC Committee for Peace and Justice will meet in 205 Union to discuss activities for the "October Surprise."

6 p.m. UCPPS will sponsor a presentation by Apple Computers in 210 Hanes Hall.
UNC-Soviet Exchange will meet in the Frank Porter Graham Lounge.
Sigma Theta Alpha will meet in 209 Union.
7 p.m. UCPPS will sponsor a presentation by Ashland Chemical in 209 Hanes and a presentation by United Telephone of Florida and Carolina Telephone at the Carolina Inn.
A seminar on underage drinking and fake IDs will be conducted by Student Legal Services on the first-floor lounge of Stacy Residence Hall.
CHISPA will meet on the second floor of the Union.
The Child Abuse Prevention Program (CAPP) will meet in the Campus Y Lounge.
Youth for Elderly Service (YES) will have a

Halloween party preparation meeting in the Campus Y Lounge.
7:30 p.m. The Gay Studies Group will meet in the Union—check the activities board for exact location. Come to the CGLA office to pick up materials for the meeting.
Free tutoring in French 1-4, Spanish 1-4, ECON 10, STAT 11 & 23, CHEM 11, Biology 11, & Math 10, 16-18, 22, 30 & 31 on the second floor of Dey Hall.
Improve your conversation and immerse yourself in French culture. Conversation will begin at 7:30 p.m. followed by a program at 8 p.m. on the second floor lounge of Carmichael Residence Hall.
TARP will have an open house in 209 Union.
8 p.m. UNC Young Democrats will host a discussion in 211 Union on the abortion "gag rule" at federally funded clinics.

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JUNIORS

Explore different career options and look for internships through the Carolina Career Day Oct. 16 in the Great Hall 12:30 - 5:00 P.M.

Get a Head Start at the Carolina Career Fair

October 16 in Great Hall 12:30 - 5:00 p.m.

Seniors: Meet prospective employers and find out what they have to offer. (BRING RESUMES!)

Juniors: Look for INTERNSHIPS and explore different kinds of careers

Sophomores & Freshmen: Discover which majors are sought by employers and what career planning (electives, experience, and activities) will be valuable.

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University Career Planning & Placement Services - Division of Student Affairs

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