



Couple Implants Microchips Into Hands

Chip Allows Access to Car, Doors and Computer

March 8, 2006 — - Amal Graafstra waves his hand in front of a locked door, and it opens. His girlfriend, Jennifer Tomblin, places her hand inches from her computer, and she is instantly signed on.

There are no supernatural forces at work in the couple's home in Vancouver, British Columbia, just the latest technology. Graafstra and Tomblin are among about 30 people in the world who have voluntarily implanted microchips into their hands.

"I did it because I don't want to carry anything around," Graafstra said. "I really did this for convenience."

At Graafstra's request, a surgeon friend implanted a chip in each of his hands in March 2005.

Tomblin, a 23-year-old marketing student, thought the chip was odd at first, but over time she became sold on its usefulness. Her chips were implanted in December.

"Because the procedure didn't hurt, it was really no big deal," Tomblin said. "It's not interacting with my body in any way, and the chip can only be used for what I want to use it for. It can't be used to track my movements or to keep tabs on me. It only has a range of a couple feet."

The chips give the couple complete access to each other's lives, but there is a solution should they break up.

Graafstra said they could easily remove each other from the chips' authorized list or remove the chips entirely.

Prior Chip Implants

Silicone chips have been safely implanted in pets and livestock for years, and human implantation isn't new. Some employees of the Mexican Ministry of Justice are implanted with chips that give them a fast track through their building's security, and a dance club in Barcelona, Spain, offered chips to VIPs.

In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration gave approval to Florida-based Verichip in 2004 to implant radio frequency identification chips, or RFIDs, in people to retrieve medical information. Verichip said it had implanted more than 2,000 people around the world and 60 in the United States at about \$200 each.

The chips are inexpensive and can easily be ordered online starting at \$30.

About 30 people around the world have independently inserted RFID tags into their bodies, according to Web-based forums devoted to what participants call "getting tagged."

Graafstra has written a book, "RFID Toys: 11 Cool Projects for Home, Office and Entertainment," to be published this month.