



# Intrauterine Device

## What is an IUD?

The Intrauterine Device (IUD) is a reversible form of birth control for women. It is a small T-shaped device inserted into the uterus by a health care provider.

## How an IUD works

- it may have a progesterone system that releases levonorgestrel directly into the uterus
- it prevents the egg from being fertilized by the sperm
- in rare cases if the egg has been fertilized, the IUD prevents egg attachment to the uterine wall

## How effective is an IUD?

When used correctly, an IUD is 97 to 99 percent effective. In other words, of 100 females who use the IUD according to instructions for one year, one to three of them will get pregnant.

## You can use an IUD if:

- you want an effective, long-term reversible method of birth control
- you are at low risk for getting a sexually transmitted infection
- you have not had pelvic inflammatory disease, chlamydia or gonorrhea in the past 12 months
- you are breastfeeding
- other contraceptives are not an option for you

## You should **NOT** use an IUD if you have:

- had pelvic inflammatory disease, gonorrhea or chlamydia in past 12 months
- untreated vaginal and/or cervical infections
- a history of postpartum endometriosis or uterine infection after an abortion in the past three months
- abnormal vaginal bleeding
- a condition that weakens your immune system
- a history of injection drug use

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- an abnormal cervix and/or an abnormal pap smear
- an allergy to the materials that IUDs are made of (i.e. copper, plastic)

## Advantages and disadvantages of tubal ligation

### Advantages

- does not interfere with sex
- can be left in for up to two to five years (depending on the brand)
- highly effective
- rarely slips out of place
- has a low risk of side effects
- protects against ectopic pregnancy

### Disadvantages

- usually not recommended for women who have not had children
- does not protect you from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections
- not appropriate for women who have multiple partners
- may have increased bleeding/cramping during period or spotting between periods
- sometimes men state they can feel the string, “feels prickly”

## IUD insertion

An IUD can be inserted at any time during your menstrual cycle. The best time, however, for IUD insertion is during day one to five of your menstrual cycle. During this time, the cervix is softer and menstrual fluid provides lubrication. The IUD is generally inserted by a gynaecologist.

## After IUD insertion

Slight bleeding and mild cramps following the insertion are normal. Spotting between periods may occur during the first few months. Also, you may experience heavier bleeding and cramping during your period; if it becomes excessive, contact your health care provider.

You should schedule a check-up after your first period to make sure the IUD is in place. After that, the IUD should be checked every year.

## Checking your IUD

Although it is very rare, an IUD can be expelled without knowing it. This is most likely to happen during your period. It is a good idea to check your pads or tampons while you are menstruating to see if the IUD has come out. It is important to check for the string regularly between periods.

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## How to check for the string:

- wash your hands, then sit or squat
- put your index finger in your vagina until you touch your cervix. Your cervix generally feels rubbery, like the tip of your nose
- feel for the string that should be coming through. If the string feels longer/shorter – this may mean the IUD has moved and must be repositioned by your health care provider
- **\*DO NOT PULL ON THE STRING\*** Pulling can cause the IUD to come out

## Warning signs:

Tell your health care provider immediately if:

- you are not able to find the string
- you think you might be pregnant
- you have severe cramping
- you have pain or bleeding during sex
- you have unexplained fever/chills
- you have missed your period, if your period is late or your period is unusually light
- there is foul smelling/increased vaginal discharge

**An IUD does not protect you from sexually transmitted infections. Condoms should be used each time you have sex.**

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