

What to Do if You Have a Problem

Serious problems with the IUD are **very rare**. Some IUDs come out on their own, but this is very rare. The IUD does not get lost in your body.

A more serious problem is an infection in your uterus. Warning signs to look for if there is an infection:

- Severe pain or cramps in your belly
- Deep pain when having sex
- Fever or chills
- Bad smelling fluid from your vagina
- Very heavy bleeding from your vagina

Call your health care provider immediately if you notice any of these signs.

Effectiveness

The IUD is one of the most effective birth control methods. It is over 99% effective which is more effective than the Pill. One reason it is so effective is that you don't have to do anything once you have it inserted.

IUD Removal

IUDs are made to last a long time – from 5-10 years. But if you want it out sooner, just make an appointment at a clinic or doctor's office. A doctor or nurse has to remove it. The removal only takes a few minutes. Most women find it less painful than insertion.

Future Pregnancy

Once you get your IUD removed, you can get pregnant right away. If you don't want to get pregnant, you will need to start another birth control method immediately.

Common Questions

Will my partner feel the IUD?

Most partners do not feel the IUD during sex. If they do, it does not hurt them. If the strings are too long, ask your doctor or nurse to cut them shorter at the clinic. The strings will also soften over time.

Can the IUD come out accidentally?

Very rarely. The IUD comes out on its own in about 5% of women who use it, and is most likely to happen during the first few months. Call your doctor or clinic if your IUD comes out, and use a backup method like condoms until your appointment.

Can I use a tampon?

Of course! The IUD will not affect the tampon, and the tampon will not cause the IUD to come out or move.

Is it bad for my body to have the IUD in there?

No, not at all. Some women worry that having an IUD in for such a long time is harmful. This is not true. It is very safe and will not harm your body in any way. The IUD does not cause cancer. It cannot get lost or float away inside your body. Women all over the world use IUDs safely every day.

Can teenagers use the IUD?

Yes! IUDs can be a good choice for teenagers, since IUDs are so effective and easy to use. IUDs do not protect against STDs, so a condom should be used for that.

The IUD is the most popular reversible birth control method in the world!

To learn more about other reversible birth control methods:

Check out our brochures on:

The Pill
Depo Provera ("The Shot")
Emergency Contraception ("EC")
Condoms
The Patch
The Ring

Check out our website at:

www.kingcounty.gov/health/famplan

To find a Family Planning Provider near you:

Call the Family Planning Hotline
1-800-770-4334 OR TTY 1-800-848-5429
For confidential information and referrals

To prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex, or after your birth control method fails:

Check out the Emergency Contraception website:
www.not-2-late.com to find a clinic or pharmacy near you.

Public Health 
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Your Guide to Getting Started

when you
choose the
i.u.d.

What is it?

The intrauterine device (IUD) is a very safe, effective and easy-to-use birth control method. It can prevent pregnancy for 5 years or longer. It is a small, T-shaped piece of plastic that is placed in a woman's uterus by a doctor or nurse. The IUD is very small, about the size of a quarter. In the United States there are two kinds of IUDs. The Mirena® IUD contains the hormone progestin, which is the same hormone in birth control Pills. The ParaGard® IUD contains copper.

The IUD is safe for your body.

Getting Started

Almost any woman who wants an IUD can have one – it is very safe for all women, including teens. You can even get an IUD right after you give birth or have an abortion.

Making an Appointment

Once you have decided you want an IUD, you will need to visit a clinic where there are doctors or nurses who are trained to insert IUDs. You may need to make two appointments. At the first appointment you will learn more about the IUD and the doctor or nurse will run some tests. At the second appointment the doctor or nurse will insert the IUD into your uterus. Sometimes all of this can be done in one appointment.

Having an IUD Inserted

Most women report that IUD insertion is not a problem, but it can be uncomfortable for some women. Taking ibuprofen or aspirin and eating a snack before your appointment can help. The appointment may also be easier for you if you do not have small children with you.

After your IUD is Inserted

The IUD has 2 small strings attached to it. The doctor or nurse who inserts your IUD will show you how to check the strings to make sure your IUD is in place and working correctly. You will need to make one more appointment about 6-8 weeks after your IUD is inserted to make sure everything is going well.

Women who use the IUD love it! It has higher satisfaction ratings than any other birth control method.

“I like the freedom of the IUD. It's birth control you don't have to remember to take every day, and it's good for five to ten years!

**— Sherry, age 27
mother of 2**

How the IUD works

The IUD stops sperm from fertilizing an egg. It also makes it difficult for sperm to reach the egg. The IUD does not cause an abortion.

The IUD does not protect from HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). You need to use a condom with the IUD for protection from STDs.

Side Effects

The side effects depend on which IUD you choose. The most common side effect is a change in your period.

The ParaGard® IUD does not contain hormones. With the ParaGard® IUD:

- Periods are more regular every month
- During the first 3-4 months many women's periods may be heavier or they may experience more cramping. Then their periods return to normal.

The Mirena® IUD contains the same hormone in the Pill. With this IUD you might have lighter or less frequent periods:

- During the first 3-6 months many women have bleeding between their periods and mild cramping
- After 6 months periods are shorter, lighter and less painful
- After 1 year, 1 out of every 5 women has no period!

Benefits

Lots of women and teens are choosing the IUD everyday because it is safe, easy, and effective. IUDs are:

- More effective than the Pill
- Long-lasting - works longer than any other method!
- Easy! You don't have to do anything else once it's in.
- OK while breastfeeding

The IUD is one of the most effective birth control methods.

Who can use the IUD

Almost any woman who wants an IUD can have one. It is very safe for all women, including teens. You can even have an IUD if you have never been pregnant or given birth. Both IUDs are safe for women who are breastfeeding.