



Intrauterine Device (IUD) Advice Sheet

What is the IUD?

The intrauterine device (IUD) is a small T-shaped plastic and copper device which is put into your womb.

How does the IUD work?

- The main way it works is to stop sperm reaching the egg.
- It can also stop a fertilised egg from settling in the womb.

How effective is the IUD?

The failure rates for IUDs are less than 1% per year.

Advantages of the IUD

- It is extremely effective contraception.
- It is long acting and works for 5 - 10 years, depending on type, but can be removed earlier.
- It starts working immediately and is immediately reversible when it is removed.
- It doesn't interfere with sex.
- It is not affected by other medicines.

Disadvantages of the IUD

- At first your periods may be heavier, longer or more painful. This usually improves after a few months.
- You will need to have an internal vaginal examination to have the IUD fitted.
- It does not protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) so you may need to use condoms as well.

Are there any risks?

- If you are at risk of STIs then you may be more at risk of getting a pelvic infection – this is more likely in the first three weeks after the IUD is fitted. To try to prevent this happening we offer an STI screening test to all women prior to the fitting.
- Occasionally, a woman's body might push the IUD out of her womb (expulsion), this is more likely to happen in the first few months after fitting.
- On rare occasions the IUD may go through (perforate) your womb or cervix. Sometimes this causes pain but it may cause no symptoms at all. If this happens then the IUD may have to be removed by surgery.
- If you do become pregnant while you are using an IUD there is a small risk that the pregnancy may be an ectopic pregnancy. However, the risk of an ectopic pregnancy is less in women using an IUD than in women using no contraception.

I've just had a baby. Can I use an IUD?

An IUD is usually fitted from 4 weeks after a vaginal or caesarean delivery. The IUD is safe to use whilst breastfeeding.

Can the IUD be used for emergency contraception?

An IUD is extremely effective as emergency contraception if it is fitted within 5 days of having sex or within 5 days of the expected release of an egg (ovulation).

Information about your IUD fitting appointment

If you already have an appointment to have an IUD fitted, please read the following advice so that we can successfully fit your IUD on the day of your appointment:

- It is very important that there is no risk that you may be pregnant when the IUD is fitted. Please continue to use your current method of contraception (pills/implant/injection or condoms) until the day of your IUD fitting. We may not be able to fit your IUD if you have had unprotected sex since your last period.
- If your appointment is to have your IUD changed then this can be done at any stage in your cycle but you must abstain or use condoms for 7 days before your appointment.

On the day of the of the IUD fitting please take some painkillers one hour prior to the IUD fit (either paracetamol 2 x 500mg tablets or ibuprofen 2 x 200mg tablets). IUD fitting can affect women in very different ways. Most women will have some discomfort (period-like pain) during the IUD fit.

Please ensure that you have something to eat and drink before your appointment.

Some women may experience more severe pain and may need to take the rest of the day off work or college to recover. Please do not arrange any important appointments (e.g. an exam or job interview) on the same day as your IUD fit. It is normal to need to take some painkillers (paracetamol or ibuprofen) in the first few days after your IUD fitting; a hot water bottle or heat pad can also be helpful with 'period-like' pains.

The IUD fitting appointment will take approximately 20 minutes, during this time the doctor or nurse will explain everything you need to know about having an IUD. The fitting itself takes about 5 minutes.

Type of Device Fitted.....

Date of Fitting.....

Date replacement or removal due.....

Phoenix Health Group

Cirencester – Tetbury – South Cerney – Kemble – Royal Agricultural University
www.phoenixhealthgroup.co.uk



Post Fitting Advice

How do I check my IUD?

Each IUD has one or two threads attached to it, which hang through the neck of the womb (cervix) into the vagina. You can check that your IUD is in the right position by putting a finger in the vagina to feel the IUD threads coming out of the cervix. You should not be able to feel the IUD itself. It is advisable to check your IUD in this way once a month, ideally just after your period finishes.

Will an IUD affect my periods?

Your periods may become longer or heavier and you may have spotting (light bleeding between periods) in the first 6 months after an IUD is fitted. It is safe to use tampons with an IUD, but not for the 1st 3 days after fitting

Most women who have normal or light menstrual periods will find that their bleeding pattern is acceptable after having an IUD fitted. If you have heavy or long periods you may wish to consider a hormone releasing IUS (called an intrauterine system or IUS).

Can I use tampons?

It is safe to use tampons with an IUD but not for the first 3 days after fitting.

When can I have sex?

The IUD works straight away but it is advisable to abstain or use condoms for the first 3 days when the risk of infection is highest.

How often do I need to have my IUD checked by a nurse or doctor?

If you have no problems and you can feel your IUD threads then you do not need to have regular IUD checks.

If you have any of the following problems then please contact your GP:

- You cannot feel your IUD threads especially if you usually feel them every month.
- You feel unwell with a high temperature in the first few weeks after fitting.
- You develop unusual lower abdominal pain.
- You miss a period.
- You have bleeding in between your periods.
- You develop an unusual vaginal discharge.

Does the IUD protect me from sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?

No, the IUD only protects you from pregnancy. If you want to avoid STIs including chlamydia, gonorrhoea & HIV, it is important to use condoms as well.

Having an IUD removed

An IUD can be removed at any time by a trained nurse or doctor. If you do not want to become pregnant you need to start using an alternative method of contraception 7 days before you have your IUD removed.

Further information on the IUD is available on the website www.fpa.org.uk