



Intrauterine Device (IUD)

(Ex. Copper, Mirena)

What Is An Intrauterine Device?

An intrauterine device (IUD) IUD is a small, plastic y- or t-shaped device with copper wire wrapped around it. It is placed in the uterine cavity by a health care professional. The IUD stays in place for up to five years and is a safe and effective contraceptive for individuals who have low risk of acquiring STI's that want a long-term contraception.

Mirena is a hormonal-IUD (also called an intrauterine 'system') that does not have the copper wire, but instead releases hormones directly into the uterus to prevent pregnancy.

How Does the IUD Prevent Pregnancy?

The copper wire in an IUD prevents fertilization of an egg by negatively affecting the mobility of sperm, and also affecting the inner lining of the uterus to make implantation of a zygote (fertilized egg) nearly impossible.

The Mirena releases a hormone (progestogen) directly into the uterus, which thins the lining of the uterus, and thickens the cervical mucus. This blocks sperm from passing through the cervix, and it also makes it more difficult for a fertilized egg to implant into the uterine wall, resulting in pregnancy.

How Effective is an IUD?

The Copper IUD is 99.4% effective. There is little chance of improper use as it is inserted by a health care professional.

The Mirena IUD is 99.9% effective.

Remember that no birth control method is 100% effective; therefore, you always have some risk of pregnancy if you are sexually active.

Since the IUD only protects against pregnancy, individuals need to use condoms consistently and properly for more protection against sexually transmitted infections.

Where Can I Get an IUD?

Obtaining an IUD requires a doctor's prescription and is generally a two-visit process. At the first visit, a physical exam and STI testing is done, and the IUD is inserted on the second visit.

An IUD is usually inserted when an individual is on their menstrual period so that the cervix is more relaxed. It can also be done during ovulation while cervical mucus is at its heaviest.

Some individuals experience nausea and discomfort after insertion. This usually ends quickly and no further problems present. If you experience severe cramps, discomfort or bleeding, notify your doctor.

How Do I Use the IUD?

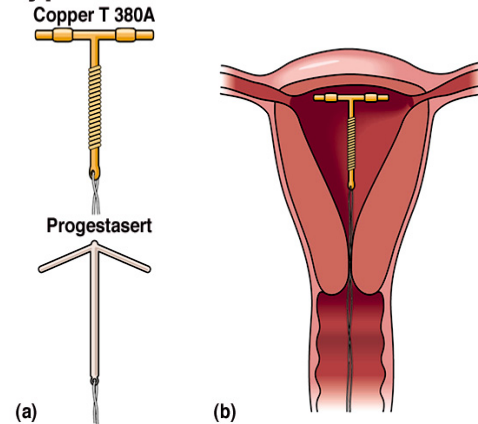
After a health care professional inserts the IUD, it is important to check on the IUD regularly. For the first month after insertion, it should be checked once a week. After this, it should be checked once a month, after your period.

To check for your IUD (copper or Mirena), insert one or two fingers into your vagina and see if you can feel the strings. This means the IUD is in place. Do not tug on the string as this may dislodge the IUD.

You should see your doctor six weeks after the initial insertion, and again every year after that for the doctor to be able to check the position.

IUD is not recommended for individuals who change sexual partners frequently. Contracting an STI while an IUD is in place increases the risk of Pelvic Inflammatory Disease.

Types of IUDs; An IUD in Position



This image shows a copper IUD and a hormonal IUD (Mirena), as well as where an IUD is placed in the uterus

What Are Some of the Benefits of the Intrauterine Device?

- Provides 5 years of contraception.
- Effective AND Reversible.
- You do not have to remember to take a pill, or to put in a sponge.
 - Mirena can put an end to heavy, painful periods.
- Copper IUD use means there is no additional hormone introduced to the body.

What Are Some Disadvantages of the Intrauterine Device?

- You could experience nausea, discomfort, pain after insertion.
- Expensive up front, although Mirena is often covered by insurance.
 - Must be inserted by a doctor or health care professional.
- Not recommended for individuals who are not in exclusive relationships.
- Some individuals may experience side effects in the first month or two such as acne, breast tenderness, and headache.
- The copper IUD often increases menstruation, so monthly periods could be heavier.

If you have further questions regarding birth control options or would like to see a health care provider regarding any sexual health matter, please contact us.

Sexual Health Questions? We have Answers!

Location:

47 St. Clare Avenue, St. John's, NL, A1C 2J9

Hours:

Monday: 9am - 4:30pm

Tuesday: 9am - 4:30pm

Wednesday: 9am - 4:30pm

Thursday: 12pm – 6:00pm

Friday: 9am - 4:30pm

Phone:

579-1009

Toll Free: 1-877-NO MYTHS

(1-877-666-9847)

Website:

www.plannedparenthoodnlshc.com

Email:

pp.nlshc@gmail.com

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