



## Intrauterine Device (IUD)

### **What is the Intrauterine Device (IUD)?**

The IUD is a small, T-shaped piece of plastic that fits inside the uterus. There are two types available. One type of IUD, (also called an intrauterine system or IUS) releases a small amount of a progestin-like hormone. The other type has a thin copper wire wrapped around it. Both types have thin plastic strings attached, which hang through the cervix into the vagina. The strings can be trimmed if they bother your partner. All IUDs must be put in and removed by a health care provider.

### **How does an IUD work?**

The copper IUD may work by changing the chemistry in the uterus, slowing or destroying sperm or preventing a fertilized egg from growing or attaching to the uterus.

The hormone in the IUD may prevent the ovaries from releasing an egg. Or it may cause the lining of the uterus to thin and increase the thickness of the cervical mucus which makes it harder for the sperm to enter the uterus.

### **How effective is it?**

An IUD is more than 97 per cent effective in preventing pregnancy. It does not protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs). You need to use condoms every time you have sex to help protect you from STIs.

### **What are the advantages of the IUD?**

- It can stay in place for long periods of time but can be taken out by your health care provider when you want to have it removed.
- You can get pregnant as soon as it is removed.
- It is low cost after your initial purchase.
- Hormonal IUD may lead to less menstrual bleeding and in some cases no periods at all.
- Copper IUD may be used by women who are unable to use hormonal methods of birth control.
- There is no need to interrupt sex to use it.

### **What are the side effects or possible complications with the IUD?**

- With the copper IUD, you may have longer and heavier periods with more cramps. This may decrease with time.
- There can be an increased risk of infection, leading to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). This is more likely if you have multiple partners.
- You may sometimes have spotting or bleeding between periods.
- With the hormonal IUD you may experience side effects such as lower abdominal pain, headaches, acne, tender breasts, back ache or cramps.

### **Can anyone use an IUD?**

An IUD is not recommended if:

- There is a chance you are pregnant.
- You have pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) or an infection in your uterus, ovaries or fallopian tubes.
- You are at risk for STIs (if you have more than one partner).

### **What else do I need to know?**

It is important to have a yearly physical once you are sexually active.

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### **Who can you talk to if you have more questions?**

If you have concerns or questions call and ask for Sexual Health, or visit our youth website at [www.thephakz.ca](http://www.thephakz.ca) or the health unit website [www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org)