
▶ **What is the intra-uterine device (IUD)?**

The (IUD) is a small, T-shaped frame with thin copper wire wrapped around it. It fits inside the uterus.

▶ **What is the intra-uterine system (IUS)?**

The IUS is a small, T-shaped frame wrapped with a hormone. It fits inside the uterus and releases a small amount of progestin-like hormone.

▶ **How do the IUD and IUS work?**

- The copper IUD may work by changing the chemistry in the uterus, destroying sperm or preventing a fertilized egg from growing or attaching to the uterus.
- The IUS slowly releases the hormone that acts to thin the lining of the uterus and thicken the cervical mucus to make it harder for sperm to enter the uterus.

▶ **How effective is the IUD/IUS?**

The IUD/IUS are very effective methods of birth control. Less than 1 in 100 women get pregnant each year.

▶ **What are the advantages of the IUD/IUS?**

- The IUD does not contain estrogen so can be used by women with estrogen sensitivity.
- The IUD/IUS stays in place and is effective for up to five (5) years.
- The IUS decreases the amount of menstrual bleeding and may decrease menstrual cramping and in some cases no bleeding at all.

- The IUD/IUS does not increase risk of infertility. When taken out, women will get pregnant at the same rate as those who never used an IUD/IUS. (nearly 90% get pregnant within 24 months after IUD/IUS removal).
- The IUD may be used by women who are unable to use hormonal methods of birth control.
- The IUD does not contain estrogen, so it is useful for women who have sensitivity to estrogen.
- There is no need to interrupt sex to use it.

▶ **What are the possible side effects or disadvantages of the IUD/IUS?**

- The IUD/IUS does not protect against STIs. Always use a barrier such as condoms for protection.
- There may be hormonal side effects with the IUS (depression, acne, headache and breast tenderness)
- Irregular spotting or bleeding is common for the first 3-6 months after insertion. It usually improves with time.
- The IUD/IUS must be inserted and removed by a health care provider
- The initial cost may be \$500-\$1000
- Sometimes the IUD/IUS can slip out of the uterus
- Rarely a woman could develop an infection or allergic reaction

▶ **Can anyone use and IUD/IUS?**

Women who have the following conditions should not use the copper IUD:

- you are pregnant
- have an allergy to copper
- heavy periods

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

A copper IUD can be used postpartum without adverse effect on breastfeeding

An IUS is not recommended if you:

- have an allergy to Levonorgestrel
- have liver disease or tumour
- have an immunodeficiency
- are breastfeeding

▶ **What else do I need to know?**

Both IUD and IUS have thin plastic strings attached, which hang through the cervix into the vagina. The strings can be trimmed if they bother your partner.

It is important to tell your health care provider immediately if:

- You find the length of string to be longer or shorter than when inserted
- You are not able to feel the strings
- Have severe abdominal cramping
- Have pain or bleeding during sex
- Have unexplained vaginal bleeding
- Have unusual vaginal discharge
- Have flu-like symptoms
- You have changes in your menstrual cycle (missed, late, or unusually light)

▶ **References:**

[Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#)

[Women's Health Matters](#)

 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 health unit website below.



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Updated August 2015

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Intra-uterine System (IUS)

