

An intrauterine device (IUD) is a long-acting reversible form of birth control that is used by over 150 million patients worldwide. They are the most effective form of birth control available; they work more than 99% of the time. An IUD is a small, soft, T-shaped device with a string attached to it. It is put into the uterus (womb) by a healthcare provider to help prevent pregnancy. IUDs work by preventing the egg and sperm from joining. If an egg and sperm do join, an IUD can stop the fertilized egg from implanting and growing inside the uterus. There are two different kinds of IUDs: copper and hormonal.



Copper IUDs

Copper IUDs have a copper wire wrapped around it. Copper changes the way sperm moves in your body, so it decreases the chances of the sperm getting through the cervix to the egg. Depending on the type of copper IUD, it can help prevent pregnancy for 3-10 years, and prevents pregnancy 98.7% of the time. Copper IUDs can sometimes make your periods heavier with more cramps.

Hormonal IUDs

Hormonal IUDs slowly release progesterone into the uterus. As well as thickening mucous in the cervix, hormonal IUDs thin the lining of the uterus making it difficult for a fertilized egg to implant into the uterus. Hormonal IUDs can prevent pregnancy for up to 5 years and prevent pregnancy 99% of the time. Hormonal IUDs can also make your periods lighter, and decrease cramping during periods. For some patients, the hormones can stop their periods completely. In others, the hormones can also cause headaches, tender breasts, acne, changes in body weight, and mood changes. These side effects usually lessen within the first 3 months.

What to expect:

In order to get an IUD, you need to get an IUD prescription from your doctor or midwife, pick up the IUD from your pharmacy, and then bring the IUD with you to your appointment. If possible, we would recommend you take pain medications prior to insertion (e.g. ibuprofen or Advil 400 mg 30-60 minutes prior to your appointment). You need to have a negative pregnancy test on the day your IUD is inserted. While you are on the examination table, your healthcare provider will place a speculum inside your vagina. This is the same thing used for your regular Pap tests. Sometimes you will feel a pinch and a strong menstrual cramp when the IUD is placed. After the IUD is inserted, you will be taught how to feel for strings in order to ensure your IUD is in the right place.

You can still feel a bit crampy for a couple of days after your IUD is inserted but many patients find the cramps only last a few hours. A hot water bottle over your lower abdomen or anti-inflammatory medications like ibuprofen (Advil) or naproxen (Aleve) can help if you develop cramping. You can also expect irregular bleeding or spotting within the first few months, but it is often worse within the first couple days and weeks.

The IUD is effective within 7 days of insertion. To be safe, you should abstain from intercourse or use backup birth control (e.g. a condom) within 7 days of insertion. If you want to get pregnant again in the future, the IUD can be taken out by a healthcare provider any time it is convenient.

The chart on the next page compares the different types of IUDs and outlines the advantages and disadvantages of each.

	Both types of IUDs	Copper IUDs Only (e.g. NovaT, FlexiT)	Hormonal IUDs Only (e.g. Mirena, Kyleena)
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly effective, reversible, safe Long-term, forgettable, invisible Cost-effective May be suitable for patients who cannot take estrogen May be suitable for breastfeeding patients Reduces endometrial cancer risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be used as emergency contraception within 7 days of unprotected sex Does not contain any hormones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A minimal amount of hormones is absorbed into the bloodstream May reduce menstrual flow and cramps May lead to absence of your period Regulates the menstrual cycle Improves symptoms of endometriosis
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can cause irregular bleeding or spotting Expensive upfront Some pain or discomfort can occur during insertion Rare risks include infection, the IUD falling out, or perforation (where the IUD makes a hole in the uterus and migrates into the abdomen; if this happens, you will need a minor surgery to remove the IUD) Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) Possible increased risk of ectopic pregnancies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May increase menstrual flow and cramps May increase pain during periods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May cause hormonal side effects like acne, headaches, breast tenderness, and mood issues Can decrease menstrual bleeding so much that some may not get a period

After having an IUD put in, you need to see a doctor urgently if you have any of the following:

- Sudden pain in your lower abdomen.
- Vaginal bleeding soaking a pad in an hour, 2 hours in a row.
- New fever or chills with a sore abdomen or pelvis.

Patient demographics

You need to make an appointment to see your doctor if you:

- You have a very heavy period and, afterward, cannot feel your strings while doing a self-string check.
- You want to have your IUD removed.
- You want to try getting pregnant again.

By signing this form, I agree that I have reviewed this information with my doctor or midwife and all of my questions and concerns have been fully addressed.

(Patient's Signature)

Date: _____

(Health provider's name)

(Signature)