

Intrauterine Device (IUD)



The intrauterine device (IUD) is a small, T-shaped device that is inserted in the uterus to prevent pregnancy. IUDs are very effective and long-lasting forms of reversible birth control. They do NOT protect against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

How does it work?

The hormonal IUD releases a hormone (levonorgestrel) that causes thickening of the mucus in the cervix and thinning of the uterine lining. It can also prevent the release of an egg but not consistently. Together, these effects make it hard for sperm to get to an egg (if there is one) and for an egg to implant in the uterus.

How effective is it?

When regularly inspected (described below), all forms of IUD are at least 99% effective, making them one of the most reliable forms of birth control available today.

How do I use it?

IUD insertion requires a visit with a health care provider. The IUD is inserted inside your uterus. One of the benefits of the IUD is that once it's in place, there is little you need to do besides regular inspections. There is a short string attached to the IUD for removal purposes; make sure you can feel it with your fingers about once a month after periods. Also make sure you see your provider at least once a year to make sure that the IUD hasn't shifted.

What if I want to get pregnant soon?

The IUD does not permanently affect your chances of getting pregnant. If you are ready to become pregnant, see your provider to have the IUD removed. Do not attempt to remove it yourself. It is possible to get pregnant soon after the IUD is removed.

What are the available IUD options?

	Hormonal IUD	Non-Hormonal IUD
Active Ingredient	Progestin hormones	Copper
Brands	Mirena, Kyleena, Skyla, Liletta	Paragard, Miudella
Effective for*	3 - 8 years	3 - 10 years
How it works	Prevents egg release (ovulation) and makes it difficult for sperm to cross the cervix	Causes inflammation in the uterus and kills sperm
When it starts working	Varies**	Immediately
Other considerations	Can cause lighter, more regular periods that may go away after some time	Can be used as emergency contraception if inserted within 5 days of unprotected sex

*Depends on the specific product

**If the hormonal IUD is inserted within the first 5 days of your period, it starts to work right away. Otherwise you will need to use backup birth control, like a condom, for about a week.

Is it right for me?

Comfort with an invasive form of birth control is an important factor to keep in mind when it comes to the IUD. You may want to consider another form of birth control if you plan to become pregnant within the next 3-10 years since the IUD can last that long.

What are the side effects of IUDs?

Insertion, regular check-ups, and removal of the IUD can be painful experiences. A common side effect of the copper IUD is heavier and more painful periods, but the hormonal IUD can make them lighter and even go away after some time. In very rare cases, injury to the uterus can happen from either IUD.

When should I call my doctor?

Seek medical attention if you have heavy bleeding, cramping, pain, abnormal vaginal discharge, fever, or think you might be pregnant. Movement of the IUD is extremely rare. If it does happen, it is most likely to happen during the first few weeks of insertion. In very rare cases, the IUD may fall out of the uterus completely or partially. If you suspect one of these events, do not try to fix it on your own. See your provider immediately.

Where can I find a reproductive health clinic?

Family Planning Clinic Locator
www.reproductivehealthservices.gov
Planned Parenthood
www.plannedparenthood.org/health-center
CDC HIV/STD Testing Directory
www.gettested.cdc.gov