

Intrauterine Device (IUD)

What is an IUD?

An IUD is a type of birth control. It is a “T-shaped” device that is put into your uterus by a health care provider. There are two types of IUDs available: the copper IUD and the Levonorgestrel-Releasing IUS (Intrauterine System).



Advantages

- Extremely effective birth control
- Light periods or no period at all
- Fewer side effects than other hormonal birth control methods
- Easier to use than most other birth control methods
- Long-lasting & cost-effective
- Lowers the risk for some types of cancer
- Quick return to fertility after the IUD is removed

Disadvantages

- May have irregular periods and spotting until periods stop
- May have more cramping and heavier periods (copper IUD only)

The IUD DOES NOT protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

STI testing is recommended every 6-12 months and/or when you have a new partner(s).

STI testing is available at a sexual health clinic or with your health care provider.

Having an IUD put in

Having an IUD put in is a simple procedure done in a clinic by a health care provider. Tests for STIs and pregnancy will be done before the IUD is put in. The IUD can be put in at any time during your cycle. It might be more comfortable to have it put in during your period. Once the IUD is in place, there is a string that hangs out of your cervix (not your vagina). This is how the IUD can be checked and removed by a health care provider.

Risks of having an IUD

- In some people, the IUD does not fit properly inside the uterus. This is not common.
- A pelvic infection can occur in the two weeks after having the IUD put in. This is not common. After two weeks, the risk of getting an infection is the same as for people without an IUD.
- There is a small chance that the IUD will come out. If this happens you are not protected from pregnancy. You can decide if you would like to have a new IUD put in or use a different birth control method.
- When the IUD is put in, there is a very small risk of it puncturing the uterus. This is rare but will require further medical treatment.

Having an IUD removed

Having the IUD removed is a simple procedure and can be done at any time. The health care provider finds the strings and the IUD is taken out. Once the IUD is removed you are no longer protected from pregnancy.

Where can someone get an IUD?

If you are interested in getting an IUD please talk with a health care provider. You will need a prescription to get the IUD from a pharmacy, and then have the IUD inserted by a health care provider at a clinic.

What's the difference?	Copper IUD	Levonorgestrel-Releasing IUS
What is it?	<i>(No hormones)</i> Plastic "T-shaped" device which contains copper	<i>(Contains one hormone called progestin)</i> Plastic "T-shaped" device which contains progestin
How effective is it?	99.2 - 99.8 %	99.9 %
How does it work?	Copper changes the acid level inside the uterus, making it less friendly to sperm and eggs	Progestin thins the lining of the uterus, making it hard for an egg to implant. Progestin thickens the mucous in the cervix, making it harder for sperm to swim through.
Does it contain hormones?	No	Yes (Much lower hormone than other hormonal methods such as the birth control pill, patch, ring, or shot.)
What are the common possible side effects?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More period cramps • Longer periods • Heavier periods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less period cramps • Shorter and lighter periods • Irregular bleeding for the first few months • Period may stop
How long does it last?	Up to 5 years or more	5 years for Kyleena (lower hormonal option); up to 8 years for Mirena (higher hormone option)
How much does it cost?	Free with prescription if you have MSP	Free with prescription if you have MSP

Questions?

If you have questions about your birth control, call your health care provider, sexual health clinic, pharmacy, or 1-800-SEX-SENSE.

Check out the BC Pharmacare website for a list of free birth control for BC Residents with MSP.

Find the clinic closest to you:

<https://www.vch.ca/en/service/sexual-health-clinics>

www.optionsforsexualhealth.org



This fact sheet contains general information and should not be used in place of individual consultation with a qualified healthcare provider.