

Family Medicine Clerkship Plain Language Summary Template

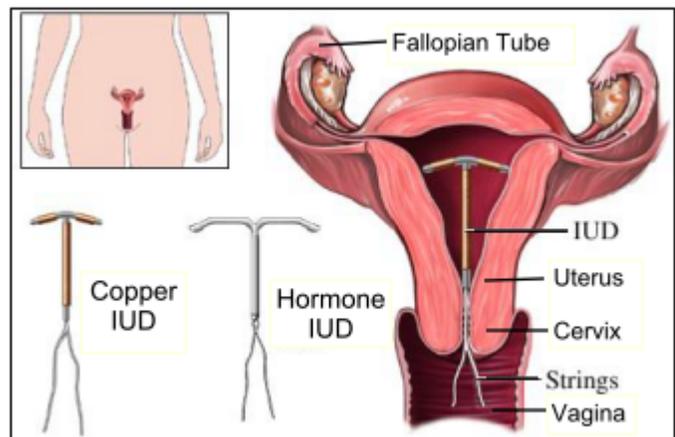
Title: Intrauterine device (IUD) for birth control

Name: Lisa Smrekar, MS3

Plain Language Summary:

An intrauterine device, called an IUD for short, is a small T-shaped piece of plastic that is put inside a woman's uterus, also known as the womb, to keep her from getting pregnant. There are two kinds of IUDs: one is a copper IUD which lets out small amounts of the metal copper and the other is an IUD that lets out a chemical, known as a hormone, called progestin. Both IUDs keep a woman from becoming pregnant by not letting the woman's egg and the man's sperm join together to make a baby.

The copper IUD and the hormone IUD are both very good forms of birth control—in one year, less than 1 woman out of 100 will get pregnant with an IUD. A doctor has to put the IUD inside the uterus in the office. Once it is in place the copper IUD can stay in for up to 12 years and the hormone IUD can stay in for up to 5 years. They do not have to stay in for the full length of time though. If a woman wants to have a baby her doctor can take the IUD out before the 12 or 5 years are up and she will be able to get pregnant.



The IUD can be used by women of any age, even teenagers and women who have never had a baby before. It is not a good choice of birth control for some women because of a health problem they may have or because of the size or shape of their uterus. Your doctor will talk with you before putting in an IUD to make sure it is a good safe choice for you. Also, the IUD does not keep women from getting infections that are passed on by having sex so it is important to still use condoms.

On top of being good at keeping a woman from getting pregnant, the IUD is good for other reasons too:

- There is nothing else you have to do once the IUD is put in
- It does not affect sex or other daily activities
- You can still use a tampon during your period
- The hormone IUD may even make you have less bleeding and less pain with your period.

Like most medicines, the IUD has some possible reactions you could get after it is put in, such as:

- More pain and bleeding during your period if you have the copper IUD.
- Bleeding at times other than your period for the first 3-6 months if you have the hormone IUD.
- Some women with the hormone IUD get headaches, feel sick to their stomach, or have sore breasts.

Overall, the IUD is safe and it is rare to have any serious problems. There is a small chance that:

- The IUD could come out of the uterus after being put in.
- The IUD could poke a hole in the uterus when it is being put in.
- You could get a disease of the uterus and the tubes that come off the uterus (the Fallopian tubes) called pelvic inflammatory disease.
- A pregnancy could form even with the IUD in place. This makes it more likely for the pregnancy to grow in the Fallopian tubes, called an ectopic pregnancy.

The IUD is safe for moms who are nursing their baby and it is possible to have one put in right away in the hospital after the baby is born. There is a higher chance that the IUD will fall out of the uterus over time if it is put in right after giving birth so it is generally not recommended. It is less likely to fall out over time if it is put in when you visit your doctor 6-8 weeks after having the baby. For some women it is hard to get back to the doctor after having their baby. This could be because they do not have insurance or money to pay for the visit, they do not have a way to get to the doctor's office, or some other reason. For these women it might make sense to put in the IUD right after their baby is born. If you are pregnant now and want to use an IUD after you have your baby, talk to your doctor about what will be the best choice and the best timing for you.

Additional Resources:

FamilyDoctor.org

<http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/prevention-wellness/sex-birth-control/birth-control/intrauterine-device-iud.html>

Planned Parenthood

<http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-topics/birth-control/iud-4245.htm>

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)

<http://www.acog.org/~media/For%20Patients/faq014.pdf?dmc=1&ts=20120414T1715062436>

Mayo Clinic

Mirena (hormone IUD): <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/mirena/MY00998>

ParaGard (copper IUD): <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/paragard/MY00997>

Key Words:

Intrauterine Device (IUD)

Birth control

Postpartum contraception

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Family Medicine Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up-to-date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.