

# The Intrauterine Device

**The copper coil - long acting, reversible  
and reliable contraception**

A service provided by

Sheffield Teaching Hospitals



NHS Foundation Trust



## **What is the IUD?**

The intrauterine device (IUD) is a small T-shaped plastic and copper device which is put into your womb.

## **How does the IUD work?**

- The main way it works is to stop sperm reaching the egg.
- It can also stop a fertilised egg from settling in the womb.

## **How effective is the IUD?**

The failure rates for IUDs are less than 1% per year.

## **Advantages of the IUD**

- It is extremely effective contraception.
- It is long acting and works for 5 - 10 years, depending on type, but can be removed earlier.
- It starts working immediately and is immediately reversible when it is removed.
- It doesn't interfere with sex.
- It is not affected by other medicines.

## **Disadvantages of the IUD**

- At first your periods may be heavier, longer or more painful. This usually improves after a few months.
- You will need to have an internal vaginal examination to have the IUD fitted.
- It does not protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) so you may need to use condoms as well.

## **Are there any risks?**

- If you are at risk of STIs then you may be more at risk of getting a pelvic infection – this is more likely in the first three weeks after the IUD is fitted. To try to prevent this happening we offer an STI screening test to all women prior to the fitting.
- Occasionally, a woman's body might push the IUD out of her womb (expulsion), this is more likely to happen in the first few months after fitting.
- On rare occasions the IUD may go through (perforate) your womb or cervix. Sometimes this causes pain but it may cause no symptoms at all. If this happens then the IUD may have to be removed by surgery.
- If you do become pregnant while you are using an IUD there is a small risk that the pregnancy may be an ectopic pregnancy. However, the risk of an ectopic pregnancy is less in women using an IUD than in women using no contraception.

Ask the nurse or doctor and they will talk to you about the advantages and disadvantages of having an IUD and they will offer you an STI screen.

## **Information about your IUD/IUS fitting appointment**

If you already have an appointment to have an IUD fitted, please read the following advice so that we can successfully fit your IUD on the day of your appointment

- It is very important that there is no risk that you may be pregnant when the IUD/IUS is fitted. Please continue to use your current method of contraception (pills/implant/injection or condoms) until the day of your IUD/IUS fitting and do not have unprotected sex prior to the fit.

- If you are at risk of a sexually transmitted infection (STI) then it is important to have a clear STI screen prior to your IUD/IUS fitting appointment. You may be at risk if you have had;
  - a new sexual partner in the last three months or
  - if you have had more than one sexual partner in the last one year

You can easily arrange for an STI screen by coming into clinic to do a self-service screen or by visiting your GP or by ordering a postal kit from our website or text service ([www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk/services/chlamydia-screening/request-a-testing-kit](http://www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk/services/chlamydia-screening/request-a-testing-kit)). We routinely test everyone who is at low risk for an STI on the day of the IUD/IUS fitting.

### **On the day of the of the IUD/IUS fitting**

Please take some painkillers one hour prior to the IUD/IUS fit (either paracetamol 2 x 500mg tablets or ibuprofen 2 x 200mg tablets). IUD/IUS fitting can affect women in very different ways. Most women will have some discomfort (period-like pain) during the IUD/IUS fit. Some women may experience more severe pain and may need to take the rest of the day off work or college to recover. Please do not arrange any important appointments (e.g. an exam or job interview) on the same day after your IUD/IUS fit. It is normal to need to take some painkillers (paracetamol or ibuprofen) in the first few days after your IUD/IUS fitting; a hot water bottle or heat pad can also be helpful with 'period-like' pains.

The IUD/IUD fitting appointment will take approximately 30 minutes, during this time the doctor or nurse will explain everything you need to know about having an IUD or IUS. The fitting itself takes about 5 minutes.

## **How do I check my IUD?**

Each IUD has one or two threads attached to it, which hang through the neck of the womb (cervix) into the vagina. You can check that your IUD is in the right position by putting a finger in the vagina to feel the IUD threads coming out of the cervix. You should not be able to feel the IUD itself. It is advisable to check your IUD in this way once a month, ideally just after your period finishes.

## **I've just had a baby. Can I use an IUD?**

An IUD is usually fitted from 4 weeks after a vaginal or caesarean delivery. The IUD is safe to use whilst breastfeeding.

## **Will an IUD affect my periods?**

Your periods may become longer or heavier and you may have spotting (light bleeding between periods) in the first 6 months after an IUD is fitted. It is safe to use tampons with an IUD, but better to use pads when your bleeding is light. It is not advisable to use Mooncups with an IUD as there is a higher risk of expulsion

Most women who have normal or light menstrual periods will find that their bleeding pattern is acceptable after having an IUD fitted. If you have heavy or long periods you may wish to consider a hormone releasing IUS (called an intrauterine system or IUS).

## **Having an IUD removed**

An IUD can be removed at any time by a trained nurse or doctor. If you do not want to become pregnant you need to start using an alternative method of contraception 7 days before you have your IUD removed. Ask the clinic nurse or doctor for advice about this.

## **How often do I need to have my IUD checked by a nurse or doctor?**

If you have no problems and you can feel your IUD threads then you do not need to have regular IUD checks.

If you have any of the following problems then please attend either your GP or Sexual Health Sheffield for an urgent appointment:

- You cannot feel your IUD threads especially if you usually feel them every month.
- You feel unwell with a high temperature in the first few weeks after fitting.
- You develop unusual lower abdominal pain.
- You miss a period.
- You have bleeding in between your periods.
- You develop an unusual vaginal discharge.

## **Emergency Contraception**

An IUD is extremely effective as emergency contraception if it is fitted within 5 days of having sex or within 5 days of the expected release of an egg (ovulation).

## **Does the IUD protect me from sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?**

No, the IUD only protects you from pregnancy. If you want to avoid STIs including chlamydia, gonorrhoea and HIV, it is important to use condoms as well.

**Condoms are available free from the Sexual Health Clinic.**

## What happens at Sexual Health Sheffield?

When you attend for your appointment, you will be asked to provide the following:

- Your name and how we can contact you - any details you provide will be treated confidentially
- During your visit you will be asked personal information so we can provide the relevant and appropriate care
- We have a duty of care to all our patients, so if you are 17 or under you will be asked relevant questions to assess your safety. If staff are concerned, they may talk to you about what to do about this and may contact other appropriate agencies. Sexual Health Sheffield will not tell your parents or carers that you have visited Sexual Health Sheffield

This is the service you can expect when you attend Sexual Health Sheffield:

All advice, information, tests, contraception, condoms and treatments are free at Sexual Health Sheffield

- No one should judge you because of your sexual behaviour or lifestyle
- All our services are confidential
- All Sexual Health Sheffield workers are appropriately and fully trained NHS staff
- All tests are optional; no examination will take place without your permission
- Please ask questions to ensure you fully understand what services have been offered, what tests carried out and what treatments given
- You can have a chaperone to help you feel more comfortable – please ask

- Our friendly & professional staff are here to help you. We will give you as much support as you need (particularly if you need help on how to inform any partners)

If you feel that we have not met the above or want to give us any other feedback, please contact us via

[www.sth.nhs.uk/patients/tell-us-what-you-think](http://www.sth.nhs.uk/patients/tell-us-what-you-think)

## **Sexual Health Sheffield**

Visit Sexual Health Sheffield's website for opening times.

[www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk](http://www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk)

0114 226 8888



## Your IUD

### Fitting appointment:

Date: ..... Time: .....

Clinician: .....

**Please note:** Some of our clinicians are male doctors or nurses. Please let us know when we book your appointment if you would prefer to have a female clinician. Sexual Health Sheffield also has trained chaperones - please ask if you would like a chaperone to be present.

Sometimes there may be a trainee in clinic fitting your IUD. All trainees are closely supervised by experienced doctors.

**IUD expiry date:** .....

**Type of IUD:** .....



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