

# INTRA-UTERINE DEVICE (IUD)

## WHAT IS AN INTRA-UTERINE DEVICE?

An Intra-Uterine Device (IUD) is a T-shaped device with a copper wire around it that is inserted into the uterus by a trained health care provider. It is a long-acting method of reversible birth control that can remain in place for five to ten years, depending on the type. There are different brands of copper IUDs available, one brand is the Flexi-T.

## HOW IT WORKS

- Prevents the egg from being fertilized by sperm
- Changes the lining of the uterus to prevent implantation
- Decreases the sperm's ability to get through the cervical mucus

An IUD can be inserted at any time during your menstrual cycle; however, the best time is during day one to five of your menstrual cycle. During this time, the cervix is softer and menstrual fluid provides lubrication. The IUD can only be inserted by a trained health care provider.

You should schedule a checkup 4 to 5 weeks after your insertion to make sure the IUD is still in the correct place.

## EFFECTIVENESS

When used correctly, an IUD is 99.8 per cent effective against pregnancy.

## WHEN TO USE AN IUD

- You want an effective, long-term, reversible method of birth control
- You are at low risk for getting a sexually transmitted infection (STI)
- You do not have untreated pelvic inflammatory disease, chlamydia or gonorrhea
- You are breastfeeding
- You have a contraindication to hormonal contraception

**An IUD does not protect you from STI's.** Always use a condom from beginning to end of all sexual contact to reduce your risk.

## WHEN NOT TO USE AN IUD

- Untreated vaginal and/or cervical infections.
- A history of postpartum endometritis or uterine infection after an abortion in the past three months.
- An allergy to the materials in the IUD (i.e., copper, plastic)



### ADVANTAGES

- Can be left in place for up to five years (some up to ten years)
- Does not interfere with sex
- Highly effective
- Rarely slips out of place
- Low risk of side-effects
- Protects against ectopic pregnancies
- May reduce the risk of endometrial cancer

### DISADVANTAGES

- May cause irregular bleeding or spotting in the first few months after insertion
- Does not protect you from STIs, including HIV
- Must be inserted and removed by a trained health care professional
- Insertion may cause some bleeding and cramping or discomfort
- May increase menstrual bleeding or cramping
- Although rare, the IUD may completely or partially come out of the uterus in up to six per cent of users

### HOW TO CHECK FOR THE THREADS

1. Wash your hands then sit or squat
2. Put your index finger in your vagina until you touch your cervix; your cervix generally feels rubbery, like the tip of your nose
3. Feel for the threads that should be coming through the cervix; if you have trouble finding the threads or feel more than just the threads, call your health care provider right away. In the meantime, use a non-hormonal form of birth control as a back-up
4. Do not pull on the threads; pulling can cause the IUD to come out

### TELL YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER IMMEDIATELY IF

- You are not able to find the threads
- You do not have a period for six weeks and you have other symptoms of pregnancy
- You have severe cramping or bleeding
- You have pain or bleeding during sex
- You have unexplained fever and/or chills
- There is foul smelling and/or increased vaginal discharge

### HELPFUL INFORMATION RELATED TO YOUR IUD INSERTION

- Arrive on time for your appointment or call to reschedule if you are unable to make it
- Do not urinate 2 hours ahead of your appointment time as you will have a urine pregnancy test and possible STI testing
- Arrange for your IUD to be picked up at the pharmacy at least 2 days in advance of your insertion and bring your IUD to the appointment
- Prevent pregnancy— use abstinence or a reliable form of birth control for at least 2 weeks prior to the insertion

- Plan for a relatively quiet day after your insertion in case you have discomfort or bleeding
- Bring someone with you to go home with you in case you are uncomfortable

#### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- Dr Dervaitis' IUD information on her YouTube channel 'Talking IUC w Dr D'
- Intrauterine contraception [sexandu.ca](http://sexandu.ca)
- York Region Public Health Sexual Health Clinics **1-800-361-5653, # 1**
- Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada [itsaplan.ca](http://itsaplan.ca)