

IUD (Intrauterine Device) and IUS (Intrauterine System)



Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH AND
EMERGENCY SERVICES

What is an IUD or IUS?

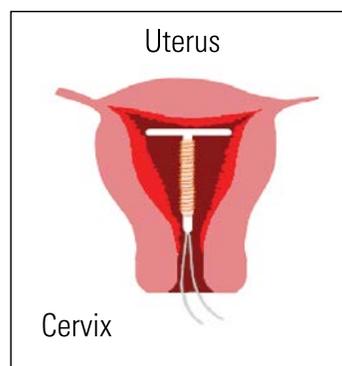
An IUD (Intrauterine Device) or IUS (Intrauterine System) are small, T-shaped devices put into a woman's uterus by a doctor. An IUD is covered in copper wire and an IUS contains a hormone that is slowly released. Both are highly effective in preventing pregnancy, but do not protect against Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).

How the IUD and IUS work

- An IUD works by using the copper to change the chemistry in the uterus and destroy sperm.
- The IUS thickens the cervical mucus to make it harder for sperm to get through. It also thins the lining of the uterus so fertilized eggs cannot implant in it.

Advantages

- both the IUS and IUD can be effective for up to five years
- both the IUS and IUD are cheaper than many other birth control methods and easier to use
- both the IUS and IUD are highly effective at preventing pregnancy (99 %)
- the IUS/IUD will not affect future fertility (once they are removed)
- the IUS/IUD do not contain estrogen so they can be used in women who cannot have estrogen
- no daily contraceptive routine required
- does not interfere with sex



Inserted IUD

Disadvantages

- the IUD and IUS do not protect against STIs
- must be inserted/removed by a doctor

Where to get an IUD or IUS

You need a prescription for the IUD or the IUS, so you will need to visit your doctor. If you are aged 24 or younger you can go to Region of Waterloo Public Health's Sexual Health Clinic. Cost of the IUD/IUS varies. Some health plans will cover the cost.

How to use an IUD or IUS

After making sure that you are not already pregnant, your health care provider will insert the IUD/IUS through your cervix (opening of the uterus) and into your uterus. Once it is in, you will need to check for the strings every now and then by putting a finger inside your vagina and feeling for the strings near the cervix. If you can't feel the strings the IUD/IUS might have moved and you need to call your doctor. A health care provider will also need to remove the IUD/IUS when it is time to take it out.

Side effects of an IUD

Women who use an IUD sometimes have heavier periods or more cramps.

Rarely, complications may include:

- irregular bleeding or spotting
- a small hole in the uterus (perforation)
- infection, or expulsion (the IUD falls out)

Side effects of an IUS

A woman might have some irregular bleeding or spotting during the first three months after it is put in, but this usually improves with time. In the longer term, many women using the IUS find that their periods are lighter and 20–30 per cent stop having their period altogether (amenorrhea).

You should contact your health care provider if any of the following occur:

- you cannot feel the IUD or IUS strings
- you or your partner can feel the lower end of the IUD
- you experience persistent abdominal pain, fever, or unusual vaginal discharge
- you or your partner feel pain or discomfort during intercourse
- you experience a sudden change in your menstrual periods
- you think that you are pregnant
- you wish to have the device removed or you want to get pregnant

Effects on your period

Women with an IUD or IUS will continue to have a menstrual cycle. Some women with an IUS have lighter, irregular periods or none at all.

Remember!

- An IUD or IUS will NOT protect you against Sexually Transmitted Infections.
- Your best protection is to use the IUD or IUS with a condom.
- If you suspect that you are pregnant and have an IUD or IUS in, contact your health care provider right away. There is a risk that the pregnancy is in the fallopian tube.

Sexual Health/Harm Reduction Program

For clinic times call 519-883-2267

All clinical and counselling services are free and confidential. No health card is required to receive services.

Questions?

Call the Region of Waterloo Public Health Sexual Health Program or your doctor.



Scan this code with your smartphone for more information about sexual health clinics and services.

Alternate formats of this document are available upon request.

Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services

Sexual Health/Harm Reduction Program

www.regionofwaterloo.ca/ph

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