



Drug FAQs for Members

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Intrauterine Devices (IUD)

Intrauterine device provides a long-acting birth control option for women. There are two different types: hormone-releasing devices and non-hormone copper-releasing device.

How does the intrauterine device work?

The device is placed in your uterus by your healthcare provider to prevent pregnancy. There are multiple different ways the intrauterine devices work to prevent pregnancy.

Hormone-releasing devices

The hormone-releasing devices (such as Mirena) release a small amount of a progestin hormone called levonorgestrel every day. They do not contain estrogen. These devices may work to prevent pregnancy in several ways such as thickening cervical mucus, inhibiting sperm movement & ovulation, reducing sperm survival, and thinning the lining of the uterus.

Copper-releasing device

The copper-releasing device (ParaGard) may work by preventing sperm from reaching the egg, preventing sperm from fertilizing the egg, and possibly preventing the egg from attaching (implanting) in the uterus. It does not stop your ovaries from making an egg (ovulating) each month.

How well does an intrauterine device work?

- Intrauterine devices are over 99 percent effective. This means that less than one pregnancy occurs for every 100 women who use the device for one year.
- The devices have a duration of use that can vary from 3 to 10 years. Your healthcare provider can help you decide which one is best for you.
- The device will then need to be replaced with a new device or another form of birth control if you wish to continue using birth control.

Which women can use the intrauterine device?

You may be a good candidate for the intrauterine device if you:

- Want a long-acting birth control method that requires little effort and is easily reversed.
- Are willing to accept changes in menstrual bleeding patterns.

What are the advantages of the intrauterine device?

- **Convenience:** It works without your needing to do anything daily or when you have sex.
- **Effectiveness:** The intrauterine device is more than 99 percent effective.
- **Reversible:** The device can be easily removed by a healthcare provider if a pregnancy is desired. After removal of the implant, the ability to get pregnant usually returns to baseline quickly.





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What are the most common side effects of the intrauterine device?

- The most common side effect is irregular vaginal bleeding. You may experience a different bleeding pattern with this device. Typically bleeding is lighter but may not be a regular cycle. Some women have no bleeding at all.
- For hormone-releasing devices, irregular vaginal bleeding usually occurs in the first 3 to 6 months of treatment and then improves with time. However, some women using with hormonal-releasing intrauterine devices for 1 year may not have vaginal bleeding which is considered safe. Some women may use birth control pills to help with irregular bleeding or spotting due to the intrauterine device. Birth control pills can be used for 1 month or sometimes even longer.
- For the copper-releasing device, heavier and slightly more painful periods may occur during the first 3 to 6 months but most women do not find this bothersome.

What are some things to think about when choosing to use the intrauterine device?

- The device does not protect against infection from HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) or other sexually-transmitted diseases, so condoms are always recommended in conjunction with intrauterine device use.

Who should NOT use an intrauterine device?

The birth control implant should not be used if you:

- Are pregnant or may be pregnant.
- Have a uterus that is abnormally shaped inside.
- Have a current pelvic infection.
- Have had pelvic inflammatory disease within the past 3 months
- Have cancer of the uterus or cervix.
- Have unexplained bleeding from your vagina.
- Have an infection in your cervix.
- Already have an intrauterine contraceptive in your uterus

This is not a complete list. Talk to your healthcare provider to decide if the intrauterine device is right for you.

How do I get an intrauterine device?

The device can be easily inserted by a doctor (or other trained healthcare provider) during an office visit. Depending on your history, you may need to take a pregnancy test. You will also need an office visit with your doctor (or other trained healthcare provider) to remove the device. The duration of use depends on the type of device.