



women's
health clinic

FACT SHEET: Inter-Uterine System or IUS (Mirena)

The IUS is a birth control method. It is small, plastic T-shaped device that releases the hormone levonorgestrel. It prevents pregnancy by making the lining of the uterus thinner. It also makes cervical mucus thicker, making it harder for sperm to enter the uterus. A health care provider inserts the IUS inside your uterus.

Benefits:

- When the IUS is inside you, it works all the time so you don't have to remember birth control each time you have sex. You do have to check the strings each month to make sure it is still in place.
- It works for up to 5 years or until it is removed by a health care provider.
- It prevents pregnancy more than 99% of the time. Pregnancy is possible once the IUS is removed.
- The IUS decreases menstrual bleeding. It may also decrease menstrual cramping.
- The IUS does not contain estrogen so it can be used by women who are sensitive to estrogen.



Risks and disadvantages:

- The IUS does not protect you against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. You should use condoms to protect against STIs.
- Complications are rare but can happen. These include:
 - irregular bleeding or spotting between periods
 - making a small hole in the uterus when it is inserted (0.1%)
 - infection (mostly during the first month) (0.1-1%)
 - the IUS coming part or all the way out of the uterus (3-10%)ⁱ
 - If a pregnancy happens while an IUS is in place, it may occur outside the uterus. This can be very dangerous. **If you have an IUS and you think you are pregnant, it is important to see a health care provider as soon as possible.**
- Most women feel some pain and cramping while an IUS is being inserted.
- If you can take ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) or naproxen (Aleve), you may take 200-400 mgs one hour before your appointment. If you can't take ibuprofen or naproxen, you may take acetaminophen (Tylenol).

- Levonorgestrel may cause side effects like moodiness or depression in a small number of women.

To be sure an IUS is for you:

- Read the IUS information given to you.
- Learn about the risks and benefits. If you are aren't sure, ask the health care provider.
- You must be comfortable with putting a finger into your vagina to check for the string after every period (or every month if your periods are irregular or absent). You can also ask your partner to do this.
- Understand that your periods might change: you may have irregular bleeding, lighter or shorter periods, or eventually no periods. Periods and fertility returns once the IUS is removed.

To make an appointment to have an IUS inserted:

- We will insert the IUS when you have your period.
- Your appointment will take about 40 minutes.
- Call the clinic at 947-1517 on the day your period starts. We will do our best to make an appointment to insert the IUS during that period or your next one.

For more information, visit the following websites:

- The Canadian Federation for Sexual Health: www.cfsh.ca
- Society for Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada: www.sexualityandu.ca
- Sexuality Education Resource Centre: www.serc.mb.ca
- Up To Date: www.uptodate.com

Disclaimer: WHC provides health information for your learning only. It should not be used to replace a visit with a health care provider.

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ⁱ Gillian Dean and Alisa B Goldberg, Management of problems related to interuterine contraception, Uptodate.com. Reviewed Sept 23, 2010.