

Advice to Intrauterine Device (IUD) Users

Post Insertion Advice for Users



The IUD is a small plastic and copper device with plastic threads on the end. A trained doctor or nurse fits the device into the womb.

You have been fitted with a _____ device

Date of fitting _____

Date of removal / replacement _____

What can I expect after a device is fitted?

After insertion you are likely to experience vaginal bleeding or staining. The duration of this initial bleeding is very variable and can sometimes persist until the next period. You may have some period type pain or cramps for a few days. Take any simple painkiller that you would take for period pain.

How soon does the device work?

You can rely on your device for contraception as soon as it is fitted

When can I use tampons?

You can use tampons but beware of getting your IUD threads caught up in the tampon when you remove it. Prolonged use of the same tampon (more than 12 hours) is not advised as it can potentially increase toxic shock syndrome.

What about moon cups?

There is some evidence that these can cause an IUD to come out, so we recommend to use it with caution and check your threads after use.

How will I know if the IUD is still in place?

Inspect pads/tampons during a period to check that the device has not been expelled. It is important to feel for IUD threads so that you can check that the IUD is still in place. The doctor or nurse will teach you how to check the threads of the device. The best time to check is usually after a period because it is during periods that the IUD is most likely to come out.

Is there a risk of infection?

There is a small risk of infection during the first 3 weeks after fitting. You should report immediately to your GP or Contraception & Sexual Health clinic if you develop an offensive vaginal discharge, pelvic pain and a temperature greater than 38.5 degrees centigrade, especially if preceded by rigours/shivers and/or high temperature. It is important to understand that the IUD offers no protection against any sexually transmitted infection; therefore it is advisable that condoms are used for safer sex especially if in a new relationship.

If your IUD was fitted for emergency contraception?

Please remember to carry out a pregnancy test in 3-4 weeks.

What will happen to my menstrual periods?

Menstrual periods may be heavier, more painful and last longer, especially in the first few months after insertion.

What happens if I get pregnant?

There is no evidence of a baby being harmed by the IUD even if the pregnancy occurs with the IUD still in position. Nevertheless, the device should normally be removed in early pregnancy to prevent late miscarriage. Pregnancies that occur with an IUD in place might be ectopic, a potentially dangerous condition. Therefore, if you think you might be pregnant, report immediately to your GP or Contraception & Sexual Health clinic.

How often do I need to come back?

No routine checks are necessary, however you should contact the clinic at any time if you experience problems.

What problems should I be concerned about?

Please contact the clinic or see a healthcare professional if:

- You have new onset lower abdominal pain or pelvic pain (especially if any post-insertion pain initially improved).
- You have offensive vaginal discharge.
- You miss a period or have an unusually light bleed only.
- You are worried that your device is coming out.
- You have pain during sexual intercourse.
- You develop irregular bleeding.
- You are worried that your threads are missing or can feel the hard edge of the coil. If this has happened, either abstain from intercourse or use a condom until a healthcare professional has checked the position of the coil. If you have had unprotected sex in the last 7 days prior to this change, please contact the clinic as soon as possible as you may require emergency contraception.

When can I go to the gym?

An IUD will not be expelled by vigorous aerobic exercise so you can resume any fitness regime when you feel ready.

How long can a device stay in place?

Most IUDs can stay in for 5-10 years depending on the type of device; the doctor or nurse will advise you. If you have had a copper device fitted after your 40th birthday, it does not need to be changed unless you are having problems with it. Once your periods have stopped for a year after the menopause (if your menopause occurs after the age of 50 years) or 2 years after your last period (if menopause before 50 years), we recommend you have the device taken out.

You will not be sent a reminder for removal.

How is it taken out?

A trained doctor or nurse can take out the device at any time, however, if you do not want to become pregnant, we would advise you to abstain from intercourse, or use extra precautions, e.g. condoms for 7 days before the device is removed. Your usual fertility returns as soon as the device is taken out.

Does the Cu IUD need to be removed before Magnetic Resonance Imaging?

Not usually. The Cu IUD has been shown to be safe at magnetic field strengths up to 3 tesla, however, you must inform the radiographer that you have a copper IUD. They will not trigger any alerts at the airport.

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