



## **INTRAUTERINE DEVICE (IUD)**

The intrauterine device is an implantable device that is inserted into the uterus. Small doses of a particular substance are released into the uterus, blocking the sperm from entering the fallopian tubes and thus preventing pregnancy.

There are a variety of types of intrauterine devices. In the past, they have been made of a variety of materials. In addition to the device itself, they may contain either progesterone or copper.

Intrauterine devices are usually inserted during menses, to avoid the disruption of a pregnancy. However, they can be inserted at any time throughout the menstrual cycle.

Not all women are candidates for using an intrauterine device. Contraindications to their use include a known cervicovaginal infection, a history of pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility, or an unevaluated cervical or uterine disease. Women who have more than one sexual partner or who have never been pregnant should not use an intrauterine device. While having no children is not a contraindication to IUD use, insertion may be more difficult and the importance of reporting any symptoms cannot be overstated.

Intrauterine devices have a relatively low failure rate, and have the advantage of not requiring their user to remember to use them. However, they do have some potential complications. About 10% of intrauterine devices are expelled during the first year after insertion. Therefore it is important that you check the placement of your IUD on a regular basis. This is accomplished by feeling the cervix and making sure that the string that is attached to the IUD is still present. If you cannot feel your string, you should make an appointment with your physician. About 15% to 20% of women who use an IUD have increased bleeding during their menstrual cycle or have bleeding that occurs between their regular periods.

Ectopic pregnancies are more common for women who use an IUD. If pregnancy occurs with an IUD in place, it is ectopic in about 5% of cases. Thus, if you become pregnant with an IUD in place, you should see your doctor immediately.

Pelvic infections may be more common in women who use an IUD. If you experience abdominal or pelvic pain, fever, or an unusual vaginal discharge it is important to notify your doctor so that it can be investigated.

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