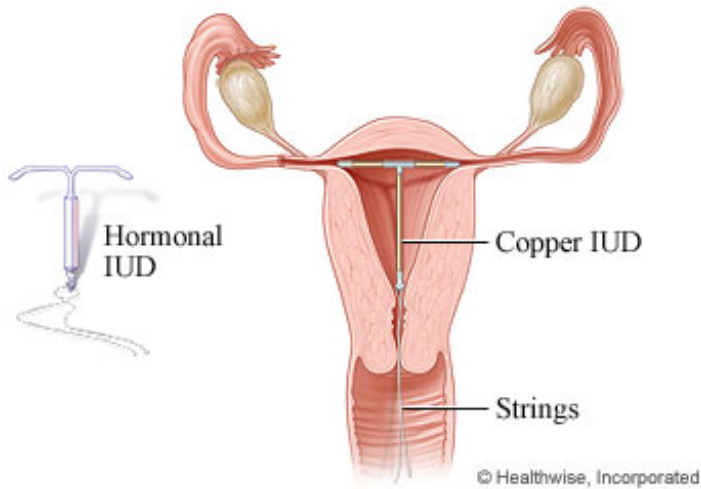


# Intrauterine Device (IUD) Insertion: Care Instructions



## Your Care Instructions

The intrauterine device (IUD) is a very effective method of birth control. It is a small, plastic, T-shaped device that contains copper or hormones. The doctor inserts the IUD into your uterus. If you and your doctor discuss it before you give birth, this can be done right after you have your baby. A plastic string tied to the end of the IUD hangs down through the cervix into the vagina.

There are two types of IUDs. The copper IUD is effective for up to 10 years. The hormonal IUD is effective for either 3 years or 6 years, depending on which IUD is used. But your doctor may talk to you about leaving it in for longer. The hormonal IUD also reduces menstrual bleeding and cramping. Both types of IUD most likely work by damaging or killing the man's sperm. This means that the woman's egg can't join with the sperm. IUDs may also change the lining of the uterus so that the egg does not lodge there.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

- It's safe to use while breastfeeding.
- You may experience some mild cramping and light bleeding (spotting) for 1 or 2 days. Use a hot water bottle or a heating pad set on low on your belly for pain.
- Take an over-the-counter pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), and naproxen (Aleve) if needed. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
- Do not take two or more pain medicines at the same time unless the doctor told you to. Many pain medicines have acetaminophen, which is Tylenol. Too much acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be harmful.
- If you want to check the string of your IUD, insert a finger into your vagina and feel for the cervix, which is at the top of the vagina and feels harder than the rest of your vagina. You should be able to feel the thin, plastic string coming out of the opening of your cervix. If you cannot feel the string, use another form of birth control and make an appointment with your doctor to have the string checked.
- If the IUD comes out, save it and call your doctor. Be sure to use another form of birth control while the IUD is out.
- Use latex condoms to protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), such as gonorrhea and chlamydia. An IUD does not protect you from STIs. Having one sex partner (who does not have STIs and does not have sex with anyone else) is a good way to avoid STIs.

## When should you call for help?

**Call** anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You passed out (lost consciousness).
- You have sudden, severe pain in your belly or pelvis.

**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new belly or pelvic pain.
- You have severe vaginal bleeding. This means that you are soaking through your usual pads or tampons each hour for 2 or more hours.
- You are dizzy or lightheaded, or you feel like you may faint.
- You have a fever and pelvic pain or vaginal discharge.
- You have pelvic pain that is getting worse.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You cannot feel the string, or the IUD comes out.
- You feel sick to your stomach, or you vomit.
- You think you may be pregnant.

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