

Intrauterine device (IUD)

The IUD is a method of long-acting reversible contraception (LARC). LARC is very effective because it doesn't depend on you remembering to take or use it.

Effectiveness

- It's over 99% effective at preventing pregnancy.
- Less than 1 IUD user in 100 will get pregnant in 1 year.
- When the IUD is used for 5 years, fewer than 2 IUD users in 100 will get pregnant over 5 years.

Who can use it?

- Most people with a uterus can use an IUD, including those who've never been pregnant and young people.
- It may not be suitable if you've had problems with your uterus (womb) or cervix, unexplained bleeding from your vagina, or have an untreated pelvic or sexually transmitted infection.
- A doctor or nurse will need to ask about your medical history. Tell them about any illness or operations you've had as you may need specialist care during fitting.
- **After having a baby:** If an IUD isn't fitted in the first 48 hours after the birth you'll need to wait until 4 weeks after the birth. An IUD can be used while you're breastfeeding..

How it works

- A small plastic and copper device is put into the uterus (womb).
- The copper stops sperm from surviving, and alters your cervical mucus to help stop sperm reaching an egg.
- An IUD may also stop a fertilised egg implanting in the uterus.

Advantages

- It's easy to fit and works as soon as it's put in.
- Can stay in 5 or 10 years depending on type, but can be taken out at any time.
- It's not affected by other medicines.
- You don't have to think about contraception for as long as the IUD is in place.
- It can be used if you're breastfeeding.

Disadvantages

- Periods may be heavier, longer and more painful.
- Insertion can be uncomfortable or painful for some people.

Risks

- There's a small chance of you getting an infection during the first 20 days after an IUD is put in.
- It might go through (perforate) your uterus (womb) or cervix when it is put in. This is very uncommon.
- Can be pushed out by your uterus (expulsion) or can move (displacement). This is not common.
- You're unlikely to get pregnant while using an IUD but if you do, there's a risk of having an ectopic pregnancy. You're less likely to have an ectopic pregnancy while you're using an IUD than when you're not using any contraception.

Periods and fertility

- In the first 6 months you might have irregular bleeding or spotting.
- Some people have heavier, longer and more painful periods. If you have problematic bleeding it may be possible for a doctor or nurse to give you medicine that can help control the bleeding. They may also check the bleeding isn't due to other causes such as infection.
- You may wish to consider using a hormone-releasing IUD called an intrauterine system (IUS) which can reduce bleeding and pain, as well as preventing pregnancy.
- Your fertility returns to normal as soon as the IUD is taken out.

Other things to know about the IUD

- If fitted after age 40 an IUD is effective for contraception until the menopause when contraception is no longer needed.
- You'll be taught to check the IUD is in place.
- A check for any existing infection may be advised before an IUD is put in.

For lots more information about the implant go to www.sexwise.org.uk/IUD

All methods of contraception come with a Patient Information Leaflet which provides detailed information about the method.

This is general information based on evidence-guided research from the World Health Organisation and The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and National Institute of Health and Care Excellence guidance.

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General information

- Get information about contraception and sexual health at www.sexwise.org.uk

- Get information for young people under 25 at www.brook.org.uk
- Find your closest contraception or sexual health clinic at www.fpa.org.uk/clinics
- Find a GP or pharmacy at www.nhs.uk (England), www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk (Wales), www.nhsinform.scot (Scotland) and www.hscni.net (Northern Ireland).

Emergency contraception

If you've had sex without contraception, or think your method might've failed, there are different types of emergency contraception you can use.

- An IUD is the most effective option. It can be fitted up to five days after sex, or up to five days after the earliest time you could've ovulated (released an egg).
- An emergency contraceptive pill with the active ingredient ulipristal acetate can be taken up to five days (120 hours) after sex. It's available with a prescription or to buy from a pharmacy. ellaOne is the only brand in the UK.
- An emergency contraceptive pill with the hormone levonorgestrel can be taken up to three days (72 hours) after sex. It's available with a prescription or to buy from a pharmacy. There are different brands.

Try and get emergency contraception as soon as possible after unprotected sex.

Emergency pills are available for free at some pharmacies. Age restrictions may apply.

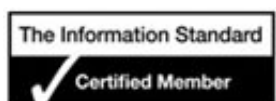
Sexually transmitted infections

- Most methods of contraception don't protect you from sexually transmitted infections.
- Male (external) and female (internal) condoms, when used correctly and consistently, can help protect against sexually transmitted infections. If you can, avoid using spermicidally lubricated condoms. The spermicide commonly contains a chemical called Nonoxinol 9, which may increase the risk of HIV infection.

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For more information about the IUD visit www.sexwise.org.uk/iud

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