



"I was planning to get my tubes tied after my last baby. Instead I got an IUD. Now I can change my mind if I want."

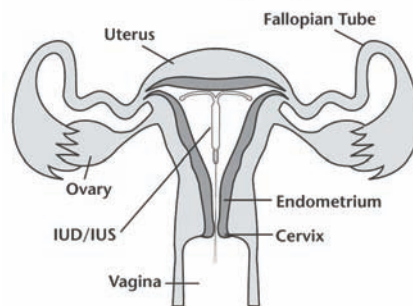
"My periods were so heavy and painful before I got the IUS. Now I have no pain and very light bleeding."

– Kaiser Permanente members

Intrauterine contraceptives are small T-shaped objects placed into the uterus to prevent pregnancy. There are two choices in intrauterine contraception in the United States:

- The intrauterine contraceptive system (IUS) is made of plastic and contains the hormone levonorgestrel, a form of progestin.

THE IUD/IUS IN PLACE IN THE UTERUS



How do the IUD and the IUS work? Do they cause abortions?

Neither the IUD nor the IUS works by causing an abortion. The IUD kills sperm and interferes with sperm transport so fertilization of the egg is prevented. The IUS releases a small amount of levonorgestrel hormone every day. The IUS causes thickening of the cervical mucus and prevents sperm from getting into the uterus so fertilization is prevented. The IUS also causes the lining of the uterus to become thinner, preventing pregnancy.

How effective are IUDs and IUSs?

The IUD and IUS are more than 99 percent effective. The IUD is effective for up to 10 years and the IUS is effective for 5 years.

Is intrauterine contraception safe?

Yes. IUDs and IUSs are safe when inserted properly. The best candidates to consider the IUD or IUS are women who:

- Are not at risk for getting a sexually transmitted infection (married or in a long-term mutually monogamous sexual relationship).
- Are not recovering from a pelvic infection within the last three months.
- Are not seeking to become pregnant for at least two years or more.
- Are at least four weeks past the time they gave birth.

What are the advantages of using an IUD or IUS?

- **Convenience:** The IUD or IUS works without you needing to do anything daily or when you have sex.
- **Effectiveness:** The IUD and IUS are more than 99 percent effective and are ideal for the woman considering permanent sterilization.
- **Reversible:** The IUD or IUS can easily be removed if another pregnancy is desired. After an IUD is removed, a woman has the same chance of getting pregnant as other women the same age.
- **Non-contraceptive benefits:** The IUS reduces menstrual bleeding, decreases the risk of anemia, reduces menstrual cramps, and may reduce the risk for endometrial cancer.

What are disadvantages of the IUD or IUS?

- Some women have spotting (light bleeding) for several weeks after insertion. This is normal during the first six weeks with both the IUD and the IUS. Spotting may even occur up to the first three months with the IUS.
- There may be mild to moderate cramps at the time of insertion. Taking ibuprofen (such as Motrin) before insertion may be helpful.
- With the IUD, menstrual bleeding may become heavier, last longer, and there may be an increase in menstrual cramps.

How do I get an IUD or IUS?

Your Ob-Gyn doctor or nurse practitioner can insert an IUD or IUS into your uterus at an office visit. Before the insertion, you will have a pelvic exam. If needed, you will have a Pap test and cultures to make sure you have no infections.

Will I feel the IUD or IUS?

No. Both the IUD and IUS are very soft and flexible so women should not feel either one at all. Since it is placed inside the uterus, you should not feel it during sex or during normal activities, including exercise (such as swimming, running, or aerobics). You are also able to use pads or tampons during your period as usual. If you have pain during sex, you should notify your medical professional so you can have your IUD or IUS checked. It is a good idea to check for the string of

your IUD or IUS after your periods. If the string is missing or longer than before, call your provider.

Will my partner feel the IUD or IUS?

No. Neither you nor your partner should feel the IUD or IUS during sex. The string of the IUD/IUS is thin, soft, and flexible. It stays high up in your vagina so your partner usually does not feel the string.

Can an IUD or IUS cause an ectopic pregnancy?

No. The IUD and the IUS are so effective in preventing pregnancy that there is less risk of having an ectopic (tubal) pregnancy than in women using no method of birth control.

Does the IUD or IUS cause infections like pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)?

No. PID is associated with couples who have multiple sexual partners or are at risk for getting sexually transmitted diseases, such as chlamydia. Women without these risk factors have a lower risk of getting PID with an IUD or IUS, and the risk decreases the longer the IUD or IUS is in place. There are studies showing that the copper in the IUD and the hormone in the IUS may protect against getting PID. If you have had a history of chlamydia or gonorrhea, an infection in your uterus, or PID more than three months ago, an IUD or IUS may still be a good choice for you.

Can I still get pregnant after removal of an IUD or IUS?

Yes. Your chances of getting pregnant after removal of an IUD or IUS are the same as for a woman who has not been using any method of birth control.

Does the IUD or IUS cause cancer?

No. In fact, the hormone in the IUS may decrease your risk for endometrial (uterine) cancer by making you bleed less during your period.

Do I have to have children before I can get an IUD or IUS?

No. However, women who have not had a child do have a higher chance of expelling the IUD or IUS and may have pain. Once you have had a child, your uterus is a little larger and can accommodate the IUD or IUS better.

Other resources

- Connect to our Web site at kp.org to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, health classes, and much more.
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.
- If you are hit, hurt or threatened by a partner or spouse, this can seriously affect your health. There is help. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or connect to ndvh.org.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only.