

Intrauterine Device (IUD)

What is an IUD?

IUDs belong to a group of contraceptive options called Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC). These are one of the most effective forms of contraception at preventing pregnancy.

Intrauterine devices (IUDs) are small contraceptive devices that are placed in the uterus (womb) to prevent pregnancy.

All IUDs need to be fitted and removed by trained medical professionals.

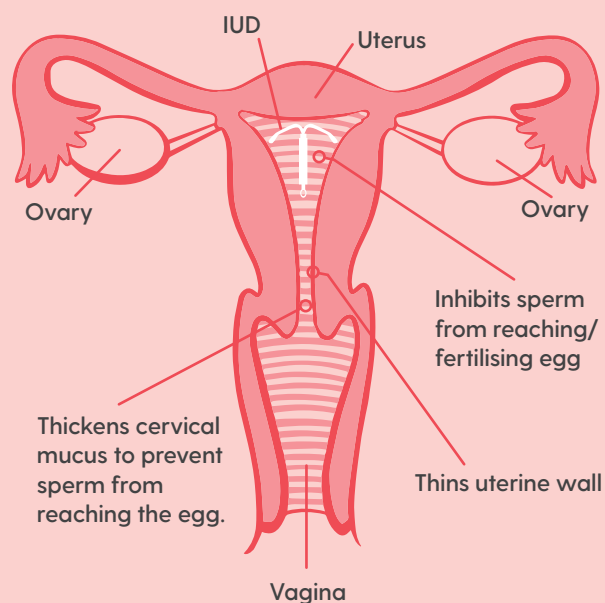
At Family Planning Tasmania two types of IUD are used.

- The hormonal IUD (Mirena and Kyleena) is made of plastic and releases small amounts of the hormone progesterone into the uterus.
- The Copper IUD (Multiload or Copper T) is made of plastic and has copper wrapped around it.

All IUDs have a fine nylon thread attached to the end. Once the IUD is fitted, the thread comes out through the cervix (entrance to the uterus, at the very top of the vagina). You should feel for these threads every month to check that the IUD is still in place.

IUDs do not give you protection from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

The best way to lessen the risk of STIs is to use a barrier method such as condoms.



This image shows how a hormonal IUD works

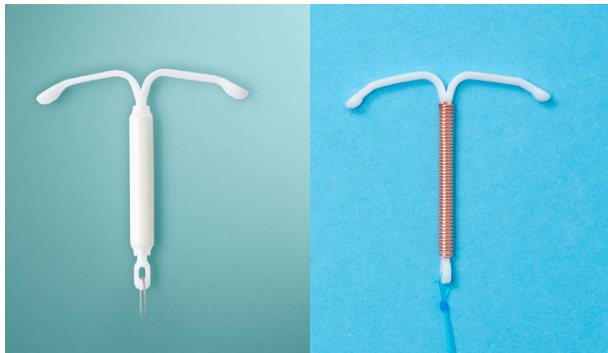
How do IUDs work?

IUDs affect sperm movement to the egg and change the lining of the uterus (womb) to make it difficult for a fertilised egg to take hold. A fertilised egg is when a sperm and egg have merged together.

Hormonal IUDs thicken the mucus at the neck of the uterus (womb), blocking the sperm from reaching the egg.

Copper IUDs affect the way sperm can move and survive in the uterus, and stop sperm cells from reaching and fertilising the egg. IUDs also change the lining of the uterus to stop a fertilised ovum from implanting.

What are the differences? Hormonal vs Copper IUDs



Hormonal
99.7 - 99.9% effective

Copper
99.5% effective

Hormonal IUDs

- May initially experience 3-5 months of frequent and irregular bleeding between periods. There are medications available to assist with this. Reduces the amount of blood loss and pain with periods.
- Can reduce the amount of blood loss and pain with periods.
- About 40% of people find their periods stop all together.
- Mirena has been a popular hormonal IUD for over 15 years.
- Kyleena is slightly smaller in size than Mirena and releases a smaller amount of hormone.
- Mirena can be left in for 10 years for women aged 45 years and over who are using it for contraception.
- Mirena can be used as the progesterone component of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) to treat symptoms around the time of menopause.
- You may initially experience 3-5 months of frequent and irregular bleeding between periods. There are medications available to assist with this.

Copper IUDs

- Does not change your menstrual cycle.
- Last 5-10 years depending on which type.
- There is no hormone in a copper IUD.
- A copper IUD can be inserted up to 5 days after unprotected sex to prevent pregnancy (Emergency Contraception).
- You may initially experience a few weeks of irregular bleeding between periods. Periods are sometimes heavier and more painful, especially in the first six months.

Is an IUD right for me?

Most people can get an IUD. The Hormonal IUD is the most popular form of Long Acting Reversible Contraception in the world. You do not need to have had a pregnancy to get an IUD. During assessment the doctor will check to see if an IUD is suitable for you.

You may not be able to have an IUD if you:

- have an active pelvic infection or abnormal vaginal bleeding
- have had certain types of surgery to the cervix
- have a condition that might alter the shape of the uterus e.g. some fibroids
- have had breast cancer in the last 5 years (Hormonal IUD only)
- have heavy painful periods or if you are anaemic (Copper IUD only)

Advantages

- IUDs are over 99% effective.
- A “set and forget” contraceptive method: once an IUD is inserted you only need to check the strings once a month.
- They are cost effective as they work for a long time (between 5-10 years).
- There is rapid return to usual fertility (ability to have a baby) once the IUD is removed.
- A hormonal IUD may help with heavy periods and period pain.
- They do not interfere with breast feeding.
- It is safe for people who have never had a pregnancy to have an IUD.
- IUDs can be taken out at any time by a trained doctor or nurse.

Possible side effects and risks

Possible IUD side effects and risks include:

- A small risk of infection at the time the IUD is fitted and for the first 3 weeks.
- A small risk of perforation, which is when the IUD makes a hole in the wall of the uterus when it is fitted.
- If the IUD does not work and you get pregnant, there may be complications associated with the pregnancy.
- There is a small risk that the IUD can fall out.
- Hormonal side effects are rare but can include headaches, acne and breast tenderness.

How does an IUD get inserted and removed?

IUDs need a small procedure to be fitted/inserted. This procedure is carried out by a trained professional.

To put the IUD in, the doctor will put a speculum into your vagina and then use a special inserter to put the IUD in through the opening of your cervix and into your uterus.

The process usually takes less than five minutes. People usually feel some cramping or pain but it usually only lasts a few minutes. Some people feel dizzy and there's a very low risk of fainting.

If you would like your IUD removed, please don't attempt it yourself. A doctor or nurse will remove it for you by gently pulling on the threads. This is typically very quick and easy.

Some people experience mild cramping and some bleeding when the device is removed. It is important to consider future contraception before you have your IUD removed as it will stop working for contraception as soon as it is removed and your fertility will return to normal.

How do I get an IUD?

You can get an IUD inserted at Family Planning Tasmania (FPT) clinics, some GPs, private gynecologists and at public hospitals. The process at Family Planning Tasmania involves two or three appointments:

1. Assessment → 2. Insertion

Typically a 30 min appointment to check if you're suitable for an IUD, organise any tests or STI checks and talk about which contraception you will use until the IUD is inserted.

Typically a 45 min appointment. We will ask you to provide written consent and then insert the IUD which typically only takes 5 mins.



3. Follow up

Your doctor may ask you to attend a 6 week check up to make sure everything is ok with the IUD.

What are the costs involved?

There are out-of-pocket costs for an IUD insertion for all patients at Family Planning Tasmania. Please visit our website for costs. Funding is available to help cover the costs if you are on a low income - please ask us about this.

Hormonal IUDs can be purchased with a prescription from your local chemist.

The copper IUD is purchased from Family Planning Tasmania.

What else do I need to know?

You need to remember when your IUD expires and get it replaced otherwise it will stop working.

It is safe to have an IUD fitted from 4 weeks after having a baby for most people and it is safe to breastfeed with an IUD.

Hormonal IUDs can also be inserted at any time you aren't pregnant and they take 7 days to start working as a contraceptive.

Copper IUDs can also be inserted at any time you aren't pregnant and they start working as soon as they are inserted.

IUDs are not affected by medication such as antibiotics or infections like gastroenteritis.

IUDs don't affect sex. They typically can't be felt by your partner during sex.

How do I get started?

To discuss whether an IUD is right for you, please make an appointment for an IUD assessment at your nearest Family Planning Tasmania clinic. You can make an appointment by visiting our website:



fpt.org.au

For more information, support and advice visit www.fpt.org.au

FPT acknowledges the contribution of FPV in the development of this fact sheet

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