

# IUDs

Intrauterine devices (IUDs) are a form of contraception that involve a small contraceptive device being put in the uterus (womb) to prevent pregnancy. There are two main types available in Australia; the copper IUD and the hormonal IUD (Mirena). IUDs belong to a group of contraception options called Long Acting Reversible Contraceptions (LARCs). These are the most effective forms of contraception, are easy to maintain, and are completely reversible.

IUDs do not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or blood-borne viruses (BBVs). Practice safer sex by using condoms to reduce the risk of STIs and BBVs.

## WHAT ARE THEY?

There are two types of IUD available in Australia; the copper IUD and the hormonal IUD (Mirena). You might get an IUD inserted if you are having penetrative sex and do not want to get pregnant at the moment.

Both types of IUD need to be fitted by a specially trained doctor, and are among the most effective methods of contraception available. They can stay in place for five to ten years depending on the IUD. The hormonal IUD is 99.8% effective, and the copper IUD is 99.2% effective.

There are many advantages to choosing an IUD, including:

- Once an IUD has been inserted, you will only need to check the thread each month.
- An IUD can be taken out at any time by a specially trained doctor or nurse.
- As soon as the copper or hormonal IUD has been taken out, your chance of getting pregnant will go back to what it was before you had the IUD inserted.
- The hormonal IUD may help with heavy periods and period pain.

## HOW DO THEY WORK?

IUDs affect the way sperm can move and survive in the uterus, and stop sperm cells from reaching and fertilising the ovum (egg). Among other changes, IUDs also change the lining of the uterus to stop a fertilised ovum from sticking.

If an IUD is inserted correctly nothing can stop it from working properly. IUDs are not affected by medications or infections like gastro.

For more detailed information, head to our website at [www.fpt.asn.au](http://www.fpt.asn.au)



## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

There are a number of differences between the copper and hormonal IUDs.

Hormonal IUDs:

- After a hormonal IUD has been put in, you may experience three to five months of frequent and irregular bleeding between periods. After this time, your periods may be shorter, lighter and less painful. About 50% of women stop bleeding all together.
- The hormonal IUD is covered by a Health Care Card. It costs around \$6 if you are a card holder and around \$37 if you do not have a card.
- The hormonal IUD may cause headaches, acne, breast tenderness and an increase in appetite in the first few months.
- The hormonal IUD should not be used if you have had breast cancer in the last five years.
- Ovarian cysts can occasionally happen in women who have a hormonal IUD. Most of the time these don't cause any symptoms but occasionally they can cause pelvic pain.

Copper IUDs

After a copper IUD has been put in, you may experience a few weeks of irregular bleeding between periods. After this time, your periods may be heavier and more painful. The copper IUD is not covered by a Health Care Card and costs around \$100. with rare exceptions, the copper IUD will not have any known effect on existing medical conditions.

The copper IUD has no hormonal side effects.

## IS IT RIGHT FOR ME?

Most women can get an IUD, and the Hormonal IUD is the most popular form of Long Acting Reversible Contraception in the world, however you should always discuss your suitability for contraceptive options with your health provider.

You may not be eligible for an IUD if you:

- Have active pelvic infection.
- Have undiagnosed abnormal vaginal bleeding.
- Are at high risk of STIs (have multiple partners and don't use a condom).
- Have had breast cancer in the last 5 years (Hormonal IUD only).



Hormonal IUDs can be inserted at any time that we can be sure that you are not pregnant, and it will take 7 days to start working as a contraceptive. Copper IUDs can also be inserted at any time that we can be sure that you are not pregnant, and they start working as soon as they are inserted.

A Copper IUD can be used as a type of emergency contraception if it is fitted within 5 days of unprotected sex.

Women are sometimes recommended to use a short form of alternative contraception in the few weeks prior to insertion to make sure that there is no chance that they are pregnant at the time of an IUD insertion.

It is safe to have an IUD inserted from 4 weeks after having a baby for most women. It is also safe to breastfeed if you have an IUD.

## HOW CAN I GET IT?

You can get an IUD inserted at Family Planning Tasmania clinics, some GPs, private gynaecologists, and at the public hospital.

Depending on the IUD you choose and whether you have a Health Care Card or not, a hormonal IUD could cost anywhere from \$6.50 to \$39.50 to buy from a pharmacist, plus any associated fees for inserting the IUD. The copper IUD needs to be purchased from Family Planning Tasmania and costs \$100, plus any associated fees for inserting the IUD.

Family Planning Tasmania has a clear fee structure which can be found on our website at [www.fpt.asn.au](http://www.fpt.asn.au) with subsidised services for priority populations. The best idea is to have your initial appointment with Family Planning Tasmania or your regular doctor to ascertain what the price may be for you.

## WHAT'S THE PROCEDURE FOR INSERTION?

To get an IUD inserted at Family Planning Tasmania you will need to attend three appointments. At the first appointment we explain the procedure to you, check if an IUD will be suitable for you and do any necessary tests. At the second appointment the IUD is inserted and then the third appointment is a check-up 6 weeks after insertion.

You must never attempt to remove an IUD yourself. Removal should only be undertaken by a health professional who will remove it by pulling gently on the threads. Mild cramping and some bleeding may be experienced when the device is removed.

It is important to consider future contraceptive needs before have your IUD removed, as its contraceptive effects will cease upon removal and your fertility will return to what it was before you got your IUD. You can discuss your options with a health professional.



# WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

While the hormonal IUD may cause minor health problems such as headaches, acne, breast tenderness, mood swings and pelvic pain, most of these symptoms settle with time and IUDs rarely cause any serious health problems.

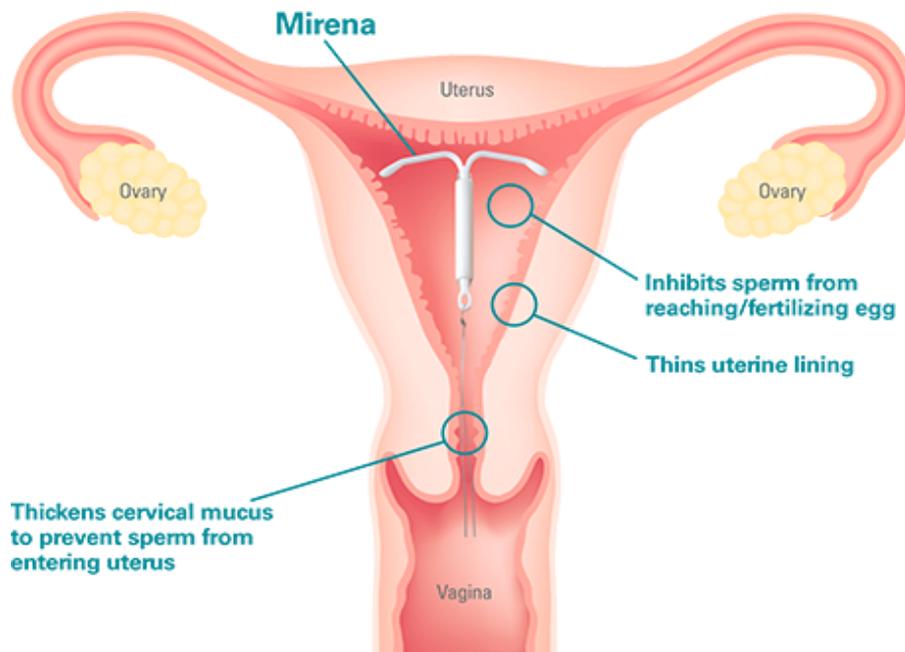
Some serious side effects that are rare but you should be aware of, include:

- A small risk of infection at the time the IUD is put in and for the first 3 weeks. If you develop an infection from an IUD this rarely affects fertility.
- A small risk of perforation, which is when the IUD makes a hole in the wall of the uterus when it is put in. This is a rare occurrence and if it is going to happen it normally happens when the IUD is put in. If an IUD perforates this rarely affects fertility.
- If the IUD does not work and you get pregnant, there is an increased risk of pregnancy complications if you choose to continue with the pregnancy.
- The IUD can fall out.

Please also remember that an IUD does not protect you from Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) or Blood Borne Viruses (BBVs). Using condoms reduces the risk of STIs and BBVs.

Also, for some people there are extra costs and difficulty accessing the service, as not all Doctors are trained in IUD insertion.

This image shows how a hormonal IUD works.



Family Planning Tasmania has clinics in Glenorchy, Launceston, and Burnie.

Our doctors and nurses can assist you with information about IUDs, or provide support with all your contraception and sexual health needs.