

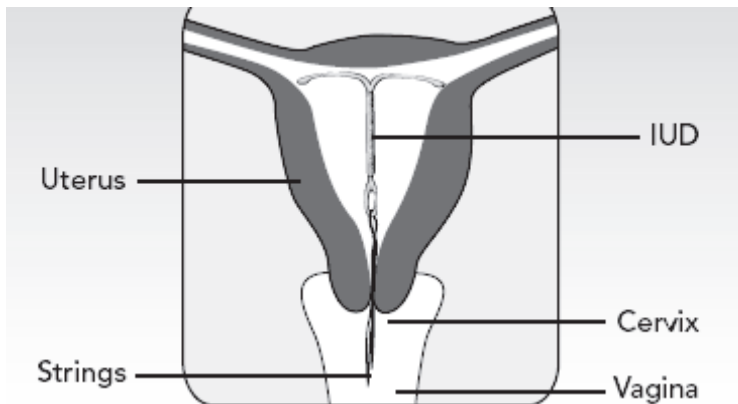
Intrauterine Contraceptive Device (IUD)

What is an intrauterine contraceptive device (IUD)?

- An IUD is a small, soft, T-shaped device with a nylon string attached to it. An IUD is put into the uterus (womb) by a healthcare provider to help prevent pregnancy.

How does an IUD work?

- An IUD can prevent the egg and sperm from joining. A woman cannot get pregnant if the sperm and egg do not meet.
- If an egg and sperm do join, an IUD can stop the fertilized egg from growing inside the uterus.



Are there different kinds of IUDs?

- There are two kinds of IUDs, copper and hormonal. They work in different ways to help prevent pregnancy.

Copper (Nova T or Flexi T)

- This IUD has a copper wire wrapped around it.
- Copper changes the way sperm moves in your body, so it decreases the chances of the sperm getting through the cervix to the egg.
- Depending on the type of copper IUD, it can help prevent pregnancy for 3–5 years.

Hormonal (Mirena®)

- This IUD has a hormone (levonorgestrel) wrapped around it. The hormone is slowly released into the uterus.
- The Mirena® works by making hormone changes to the uterus. Having this IUD in the uterus can also cause the body to release substances that can kill sperm or eggs.
- It also makes the mucous of the cervix thicker, so it is hard for the sperm to get to the egg.
- The Mirena® can help prevent pregnancy for up to 5 years.

How effective is an IUD?

- The Nova T or Flexi T IUD can help prevent pregnancy up to 98.7 percent of the time.
- The Mirena® IUD can prevent pregnancy up to 99 percent of the time.

What are the advantages of having an IUD?

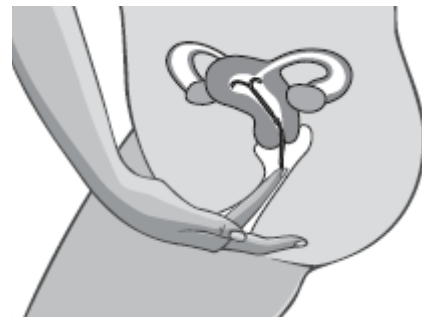
- An IUD can help prevent pregnancy for 3–5 years.
- If you want to get pregnant, the IUD can be taken out by a healthcare provider at any time.
- It is convenient. Once it is in place, you do not need to remember to take another type of contraception (e.g., birth control pills, vaginal contraceptive ring, or birth control patch).
- The copper IUD can decrease the risk of cancer of the uterus.
- The hormonal IUD can make your periods lighter. It can also improve cramping during periods. For some women, the hormones can even stop them from having periods.

If you are thinking about getting an IUD, tell your doctor if you:

- have ever had pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)
- have vaginal bleeding that is at a different time than your period
- are pregnant
- have breast cancer (Mirena® IUD)
- have a sexually transmitted infection (STI)
- have cervical cancer or cancer of the uterus
- have an allergy to copper (Nova T or Flexi T IUDs)

What do I have to do to get started?

- See your healthcare provider to have an IUD put in or taken out.
- Your healthcare provider might check you for an STI before putting in your IUD.
- When your IUD is put in, you will be taught how to feel for the strings. This will let you know if the IUD is still in the right place.
- Check your strings every month.



You need to see your healthcare provider if you:

- have pelvic pain or vaginal discharge with or without a fever or chills
- have a lot of cramping
- have any problems, questions or concerns
- are due for your regular Pap test
- think you are pregnant
- have pain when you are having sex
- cannot find the IUD strings or the strings are shorter or longer
- think you have been exposed to an STI
- have a heavy period, a change in the amount of your period, or spotting or bleeding that is not normal for you
- are told that the string can be felt during sex

What are the disadvantages of having an IUD?

- There is a 2–10 percent chance that the IUD can fall out. This happens most often in the first year with an IUD.
- There is an increased risk of the IUD falling out if:
 - the IUD was put in right after you had a baby
 - you have had an IUD fall out before
 - you have never been pregnant
- There is a high risk of miscarriage when an IUD is left in the uterus during a pregnancy.
- The risk of PID might be a bit higher during the first month after the IUD is put in. After the first month, the risk of an infection is related to exposure to an STI, not the IUD.
- Although rare, the IUD can grow into the uterus or make a hole in the wall of the uterus. If this happens, the IUD might need to be taken out with a minor surgery.
- The Nova T or Flexi T IUD can cause more bleeding and cramping with your periods. You can also have light bleeding or spotting between periods.
- The hormones in the Mirena® IUD can cause some effects that usually lessen with time:
 - changes to your period
 - headaches
 - tender breasts
 - acne
 - changes in body weight
 - mood changes

**amended with permission from Alberta Health and Wellness SX0026 Jan 2006*

Sexual Decision Making

- Choose to have sex or not—you have the right to make that decision.
- Choose to protect yourself from getting pregnant and STIs.
- Use a condom every time you have sex to lower your risk of STIs.
- Talk with your partner about these choices before you have sex.

For More Information Call:

Sexual and Reproductive Health

Education/Health Promotion 403-955-6515

Clinical Services

Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre	5 th floor, 1213–4 th St SW	403-955-6500
South Calgary Health Centre	31 Sunpark Plaza SE	403-943-9510
Sunridge Professional Building	406, 2675–36 th St NE	403-944-7666

Website

www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/programs/sexualhealth

For 24-hour nurse advice and health information, call Health Link Alberta at 403-943-LINK (5465) in the Calgary Area or 1-866-408-LINK (5465) toll-free.

This material is for information purposes only. It should not be used in place of medical advice, instruction and/or treatment. If you have questions, speak with your doctor or appropriate healthcare provider.