
Types of Intrauterine Devices (IUDs)

There are two kinds of IUDs in Canada – **Copper and Progesterone**. They all last for years and are placed into the uterus by a doctor or midwife. IUDs work well and couples like them because they prevent pregnancy without needing to do something every time you have sex (like condoms) or having to take a pill everyday. They are excellent for women who cannot take hormones because of side effects or because they have a high risk of blood clots.

Insertion: The doctor or midwife checks the size and position of your uterus. She puts a speculum into your vagina so she can see your cervix and check for infection. She sometimes uses freezing with a local anesthetic. Most women feel a pinching feeling and then a sharp cramping pain which lasts a few minutes when the IUD is inserted. Taking ibuprofen an hour before helps the cramps. The best time to put in an IUD is during or just after a period but they can be put in any time as long as we know you are not pregnant. We can prescribe and insert an IUD on the same visit.

Risks: There are no increased risks of infection except the first few weeks after getting it in. That is why we check for infection and give antibiotics to anyone who is high risk for infection. There are no long term effects on fertility. There is about 5% chance per year of the IUD being rejected or falling out. This is why it is a good idea to check for the string by putting your finger inside your vagina or by getting a doctor to check. There is about a 1/1000 chance of the IUD perforating the uterus or getting into the wrong place and needing minor surgery to remove it. Perforations heal and do not cause any problems later with having babies.

Which IUD should you choose?

Copper – ~\$80 (5 or 10 years) Many women choose copper IUDs because they are less expensive and have no hormones. They are very effective with about 1 in 100 women getting pregnant in a year. They usually make the periods heavier, longer and more painful by about 20-50%. There are no effects from a copper IUD outside the uterus: no weight gain, mood changes, nausea, sore breasts, etc. A woman with heavy, painful periods should choose a Mirena or Jaydess if she can afford it. The copper IUD is also very effective as emergency contraception.

Mirena – ~\$400 (5 years) – Most health benefit plans will pay for the Mirena so it may be the cheapest choice. Mirenas work better; only 1/1000 women per year will get pregnant and the periods will be lighter and easier. The amount of hormone in a Mirena is much less than birth control pills, patches or shots so there are very few hormone side effects. Only about 5% of women will notice any hormone side effects such as weight gain, mood changes or acne. Most women get some spotting in the first month or two after their Mirena has been inserted.

Jaydess – ~\$325 (3 years) – These are smaller and have less hormone than Mirena (8 vs 20 mcg levonorgestrel per day). They are a good choice for women who just want contraception and do not have very heavy painful periods.