



**YOUR  
HEALTH.  
YOUR  
CHOICE.**

# Intrauterine Device (IUD)

Talk to your partner about birth control before you have sex. You can use latex condoms to lower your chances of getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and prevent an unwanted pregnancy.

## What is an IUD?

An Intrauterine Device (IUD) is a small piece of plastic that is inserted by a clinician into the uterus to prevent pregnancy. It is approximately 1½ inches (3cm) in length. There are several different types of IUDs. The most common IUD is T-shaped and coated with copper. This can be left in the uterus for 2-5 years. Another type of IUD contains a hormone (progestin) but it needs to be replaced once a year. Attached to the IUD are two plastic threads or strings that hang down through the cervix into the vagina. The cervix is the opening to the uterus. The threads or strings do not hang outside the body. The IUD can also be used as an emergency method of birth control. If an IUD is inserted within 7 days after unprotected vaginal sex it may prevent a pregnancy.

## How does an IUD work?

Exactly how the IUD works to prevent pregnancy is not fully understood. The IUD may:

- ★ Cause slight inflammation of the lining of the uterus so that a fertilized egg cannot implant.
- ★ Interfere with the movement of sperm or kill sperm
- ★ Speed up the movement of the egg through the Fallopian tube.

## How effective is an IUD?

The IUD is 98% effective in preventing pregnancy.

## How do you use an IUD?

A clinician must insert an IUD. It is usually done when you are on your period. The clinician will perform a pelvic exam and check to see where your uterus is positioned. They will then insert a speculum into your vagina to see your cervix and then wash your cervix with an antiseptic solution. Next an IUD is put into your uterus and the strings are cut just below your cervix. IUD insertion can be uncomfortable. You may want to take pain pills before you have an IUD inserted. Removal of an IUD must also be done by a clinician. Do not try to remove an IUD yourself.

**It is important to use condoms or a latex barrier with sexual partners to decrease the risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection.**

## **What are the advantages and disadvantages of an IUD?**

### **Advantages**

- \* Highly effective in preventing pregnancy.
- \* Inexpensive.
- \* Does not interrupt sex.
- \* Does not require partner's involvement.
- \* Can be used for a long period of time.
- \* Can be used as an emergency method of birth control.

### **Disadvantages**

- \* Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- \* If you get a sexually transmitted infection, the IUD could increase the likelihood of developing pelvic inflammatory disease (infection of the reproductive organs), which may lead to infertility.
- \* May increase the likelihood of ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy outside the uterus).
- \* Can cause heavier and more painful periods.
- \* Cramping and discomfort during and 24-48 hours after insertion
- \* There are risks during insertion and removal that your clinician should discuss with you before inserting an IUD.

### **Where can you get an IUD?**

Most birth control clinics can insert an IUD. The IUD is available at the Bay Centre for Birth Control. The IUD is not available at The House.

### **If you need further information or would like to book an appointment, call:**

Planned Parenthood Toronto Health Services for youth ages 13 to 29. 416-927-7171. Health Services offers same-day, scheduled and drop-in appointments. For more information visit [www.ppt.on.ca](http://www.ppt.on.ca).

Women's Programming at the Bay Centre for Birth Control for women of all ages at 416-351-3700.

Youth can also access information about sexual health by calling the Teen Sex InfoLine at 416-961-3200 or chat live using MSN messenger at [spiderbytes@hotmail.com](mailto:spiderbytes@hotmail.com) from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Monday to Wednesday and 12 noon to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. You can also email us a question anytime at [askus@spiderbytes.ca](mailto:askus@spiderbytes.ca) or visit [www.spiderbytes.ca](http://www.spiderbytes.ca).