



Louis A Klein, MD, 1776 Ygnacio Valley Rd, Suite 208, Walnut Creek, CA 94598 (925) 937-0995

Intrauterine Device (IUD)

Background.

An Intrauterine Device (IUD) is a top tier contraceptive option. IUDs are “long-range reversible contraception”, because they offer continuous contraception until a woman chooses to become pregnant. The Mirena IUD can also be used to effectively control heavy menstrual bleeding.

IUDs are made of a surgical plastic and each product has an adjunctive component to enhance its effectiveness. Together the device and adjunctive component make fertilization unlikely, as well as creating an environment difficult for implantation. A woman will have her own hormonal cycle while using an IUD, but menstrual bleeding will likely be different.

There are two main types of IUDs: progestin and copper. With progestin IUDs, periods are generally lighter, shorter or a woman may have no bleeding at all. The copper IUD generally causes slightly more cramping and a heavier bleeding than her normal period. IUDs last up to 3, 5 or 10 years depending on the product, but can be taken out any time when a woman is ready to become pregnant.

Starting “The IUD”.

An IUD is placed into the uterus using sterile procedure during an office visit. A office visit is required to remove an IUD as well. You will need to have a consultation and sign a consent form prior to getting an IUD.

You can not have an IUD placed if your are pregnant or have an sexually transmitted disease or a vaginal infection. These issues will need to managed before an IUD procedure. Most women have an easier time having the IUD placed during the heaviest day of her period.

One week of “pelvic rest” is recommended after an IUD is placed. This means no tampons or sex for one week. The copper IUD provides immediate contraception and can be used for emergency contraception if placed within 3 days of unprotected intercourse.

Urban Myths about IUDs.

IUDs cause pelvic infections.	IUD placement carries a <i>very low</i> risk of infection. Beyond 3 weeks following placement of IUD, the risk for PID is no different than other contraception. High risk sexual encounters cause pelvic infections.
IUDs cause ectopic pregnancies.	Ectopic pregnancy rate for IUD is the same as a women not using contraception.
IUDs are unsafe.	IUDs are safe medical devices causing adverse side effects less than 1% of the time.

Frequently asked questions?

Q: What should I do if I can't feel my strings?

A: Ideally, we like women to be able to check their IUD strings to assess any changes. Changes in string length can mean there is a change in the IUD placement. But, it is common to be unable to feel your strings. If you suspect there is a change in the IUD placement for any reason, schedule an office appointment.

Q: What if I don't have a period?

A: It is common to stop having periods while on the Mirena IUD. If you do not have a period for 6 weeks, then do a pregnancy test. If this is NEGATIVE, the absent period will likely be your new normal. If a pregnancy test is POSITIVE, you need to schedule an immediate appointment. The IUD must come out; there is a good chance the pregnancy will be terminated. A pregnancy test should be done. Call the doctor's office for advice.

Q: Is there a risk of infertility from using the IUD?

A. No. Risks of infertility are related to ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy outside the uterus) and pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) (infections of the reproductive organs caused from unsafe sex). All women with IUDs are cautioned to have safe sexual practices, specifically have new partners wear condoms and get tested for STDs. This advice should apply to all women.

Common Temporary Discomforts.

Women can expect to feel "crampy" the first few hours after having an IUD placed. Ibuprofen is an excellent pain reliever for this type of pain. Sporadic, fleeting cramps may suddenly come and go for a couple months.

More often than not, even if a woman dislikes their IUD during the first 3-4 months, there is an adaptation in the body that causes unpleasant symptoms resolve. Generally, even women who experience an unpleasant adjustment period eventually LOVE their IUD for the benefits and convenience this form of contraception offers.

SIDE EFFECTS and ADVERSE RISKS.

Common Side Effects

mid-cycle spotting
cramping
heavy periods
change in vaginal discharge

Rare Adverse Risks

ectopic pregnancy
IUD embedments into uterus.
perforation of uterus
pelvic infection

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF YOU EXPERIENCE THESE SYMPTOMS WHILE USING THE IUD.

severe abdominal pain
missed period/positive pregnancy test
Vaginal discharge is foul.

heavy unusual bleeding
Plastic tip of IUD is felt.
exposure to STD

There is a change in your “new normal”.

Just because.