

Sexual Health

INTRAUTERINE SYSTEM (IUS)



May 2010

The intrauterine system is a small T-shaped soft plastic that contains small amounts of a hormone called levonorgestrel. It is called Mirena®. It is 99.9% effective in preventing pregnancy. IUS does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STI).

How does it work?

- The IUS is different from the Intrauterine Device (IUD) because it releases hormones in addition to its physical function.
- Must be inserted and removed by a trained health care professional.
- The hormone is released slowly over time and acts on the lining of the uterus.
- It thickens the cervical mucus which makes it difficult for the sperm to get through.
- For some women it prevents the ovaries from releasing an egg.
- It changes the lining of the uterus which decreases the sperm's ability to fertilize an egg.
- Falls out in about 6% of users.
- You can check the IUD string monthly after each period to ensure it is still in place.
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STI).
- Most suitable for women with a low risk of contracting an STI.
- Rarely used by women who have not had children.
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STI).
- Most suitable for women with a low risk of contracting an STI.
- Rarely used by women who have not had children.

Advantages

- Long-acting can remain in the uterus for up to five years.
- No daily routine required.
- Does not contain estrogen.
- Suitable for breastfeeding women.
- Regulates menstrual cycle and reduces menstrual cramps.
- May reduce the risk of endometrial cancer.
- May reduce the pain due to endometriosis.
- Some women may stop having menstrual cycles.
- Does not interfere with intercourse.
- Covered by ODSP (Ontario Disability Support Program) and OW (Ontario Works)

Considerations

- Possible side effects after insertion include irregular bleeding and spotting which usually disappears after the first few cycles.

Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) Protection

The IUS does not protect against STIs. Use a separate condom, dental dam, latex glove for each sex act

Adapted with permission from the Middlesex London Health Unit.