

# Health Facts *for you*

## IUD The Intrauterine Device

### What are IUD's?

An IUDs is a device used to prevent a woman from getting pregnant. They are small, plastic, and contain copper or a hormone. The two most common types of IUDs are the ParaGard<sup>®</sup> (Copper T) and the Levonorgestoral secretary (Mirena<sup>®</sup>). The Copper T is a T-shaped device that is wrapped with copper. It will last for ten years. The Mirena<sup>®</sup> is a hormone IUD that will slowly release the hormone progesterone. It will last for five years.



Copper-T 380 (ParaGard)  
Approved in 1984



Levonorgestoral secretary (Mirena)  
Approved in 2000

### How do IUDs work?

IUDs work by preventing fertilization of an egg. Recent research suggests they may do this by changing the way the sperm and eggs move. IUDs also affect the lining of the uterus in ways that prevent a woman from getting pregnant and also cause the cervix mucus to thicken. The Mirena<sup>®</sup> IUD may also suppress the release of an egg. The Mirena<sup>®</sup> IUD is also used for treatment of heavy and long periods.

### How Well do IUDs Work?

With normal use, the IUD has a success rate of 99%. The Mirena<sup>®</sup> IUD is effective for up to 5 years. The ParaGard<sup>®</sup> IUD is effective for up to 10 years. It starts working as soon as it is put in. Careful monthly checking for the IUD strings is vital. You should call your clinic if the string is missing or if it is longer than before.

## **How is an IUD put in?**

An IUD must be prescribed and placed by a health care provider. This is often done during a woman's period when she is not likely to be pregnant. The cervix is also softer at this time. It can be put in anytime if the woman is known not to be pregnant. An IUD can also be placed 6 weeks after giving birth. It is safe in women who breastfeed. There may be some cramping when it is put in and for a few days after. Ibuprofen (Advil<sup>®</sup>) 600 mg can be taken every 4-6 hours as needed. A heating pad help ease the cramps.

## **Who Should Not Use IUDs?**

The IUD works well for most women, but there are times when an IUD should not be used. These include:

- Women who are pregnant.
- Women who have unprotected sex with more than one partner.
- Women whose partners have other sex partners.
- Women with unexplained vaginal bleeding.
- Women with infections such as gonorrhea, chlamydia, or cervicitis.
- Women who have an active, recent, or frequent pelvic infections.
- Women who have uterine problems such as fibroids that can change the uterus.
- Women who have an impaired immune response, such as a disease that lowers the body's method to fight infection.
- Women with known or suspected cancer of the uterus or cervix.

## **Possible Side Effects**

### **ParaGard<sup>®</sup> IUD**

- Spotting between periods.
- Stronger menstrual cramps
- Increased periods that may last longer
- Increased mucous vaginal discharge (no foul odor or unusual color)

### **Mirena<sup>®</sup> IUD**

- Irregular vaginal bleeding or spotting which most often goes away after the first 3-6 months
- May shorten, lighten. or stop periods

## **Possible Problems while Using the IUD**

- Expulsion (Falling out). From 1-7% of IUDs are expelled completely or part way from the uterus the first year, often in the first few months after they are placed. This is more likely to happen in women who have never had a baby. If you do not feel the strings or feel the strings are longer, please call. A follow-up visit should occur within a few months of placement.

- Infection. Women using the IUD may be at risk for a pelvic infection, often in the first 20 days after it is put in. After that time, if a woman and her partner have sex only with each other, there is no greater risk of infection.
- Perforation. Rarely, the IUD may puncture the wall of the uterus. This may happen when it is put in. In such cases, surgery may be required to remove the IUD.

### **Warning Signs**

As with all prescribed methods of birth control, there are warning signs that may occur that you should be aware of. If any of these things occur, contact your health care provider right away.

**P – Period late, abnormal spotting or bleeding**

**A – Abdominal pain, pain with intercourse**

**I – Infection exposure (any STD), abnormal discharge**

**N – Not feeling well, unexplained fever or chills**

**S – String missing, shorter, or longer**

### **Removal**

- The IUD can be removed at any time.
- Having an IUD removed is a simple matter done by your health care provider.
- Fertility is restored right after it is removed. Unless you want to get pregnant, another form of birth control should be used.
- The IUD can be replaced with a new one. This can be done at the same time as the other one is removed.
- Women should never try to remove IUDs themselves or ask a nonprofessional to do it. Serious damage could result.