



Patient & Family Guide  
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# Hormonal (levonorgestrel) Intrauterine Devices (IUDs)

Aussi disponible en français : *Dispositif hormonal  
intra-utérin (avec lévonorgestrel)* (FF85-2019)

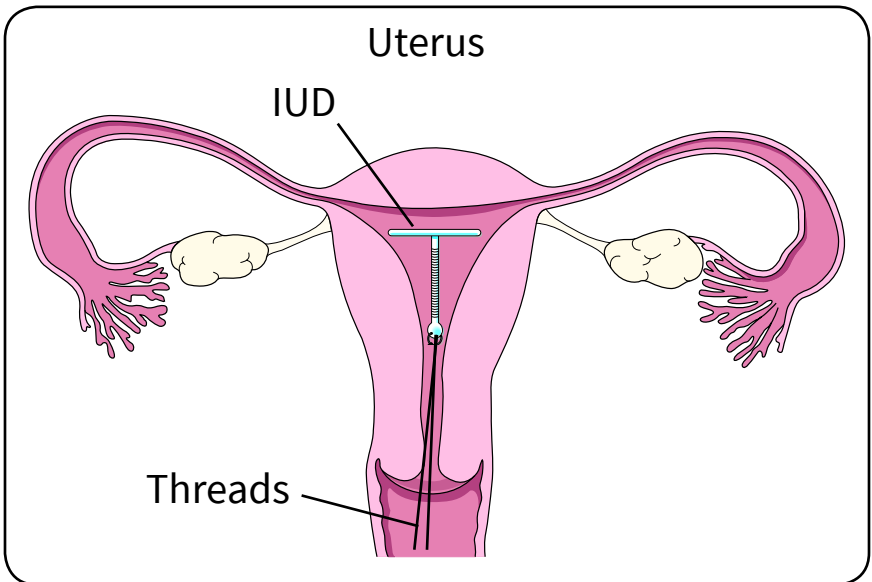


[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

# Hormonal (levonorgestrel) Intrauterine Devices (IUDs)

## What is a hormonal (levonorgestrel) intrauterine device (IUD)?

A hormonal IUD is a small device made of flexible plastic with a hormone called levonorgestrel that is placed inside the uterus by a primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner). It is used to prevent pregnancy.



## How does a hormonal IUD work?

The hormone changes the lining of the uterus and also stops sperm from reaching the egg.

## **How well does a hormonal IUD work?**

A hormonal IUD is 99% effective in preventing pregnancy over 5 years.

### **Pros of a hormonal IUD:**

- Depending on the type of IUD you choose, your periods may get lighter or disappear and this is not dangerous.
- A hormonal IUD works for 5 years.
- It is cheaper than some other methods of birth control.
- You will save money on menstrual products (e.g., tampons, pads).
- It is easily inserted (put in) or removed by a primary health care provider in 1-2 minutes.
- Neither partner can feel an IUD during sex.
- There are no pills or patches to remember.
- It is a safe birth control method for women who smoke and are 35 or older, or for those who can't take the birth control pill.

## **Cons of a hormonal IUD:**

- The insertion of the IUD will cause pain (cramping). This may be strong for 1-2 minutes.
- Depending on the type of IUD you choose, you may not have regular periods, only irregular light spotting, or no bleeding at all.
- An IUD does not protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

## **What will happen when the IUD is inserted?**

- You may wish to take 400-600 mg of ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®) about one hour before your appointment to help with possible discomfort.
- You can't be pregnant when an IUD is put in. A pregnancy test may be done before the IUD is inserted.
- A swab for STIs may be done before, or at the same time as, the IUD is inserted.
- A speculum will be inserted into your vagina so your primary health care provider can see your cervix (opening to the uterus).
- An instrument will be inserted into your cervix to measure the size of your uterus.
- The IUD will be inserted into your uterus.
- You may have some light spotting and cramping for a few hours after the IUD is inserted.

## What will happen after the IUD is inserted?

- You may continue to have cramping for a few hours after the IUD is inserted.
- You may have spotting on and off for a few days.
- **DO NOT PUT ANYTHING IN YOUR VAGINA FOR THE FIRST 48 HOURS after the IUD is inserted.** This includes tampons, menstrual cups, vaginal creams, fingers, or a penis. It is very important that you don't put anything in your vagina for 2 full days.
- Keep using the same birth control method you were using before for 7 days after IUD insertion.
- You should have a followup appointment 6-8 weeks after insertion to make sure the IUD is in the right place (see next page).

**What are your questions? Please ask.  
We are here to help you.**

**In Nova Scotia you can call 811 to talk with  
a registered nurse about your health care  
questions 24/7.**

## **Movement or loss of IUD**

- The IUD may move out of the correct place. This may happen in the first weeks after insertion. You may not feel the IUD move, but if any of the following happens, make an appointment at the Clinic and use condoms while you are waiting:
  - › new, unusual cramps
  - › you feel a tiny hard end (the bottom of the IUD) in your cervix

**NOTE:** We no longer recommend that you try to feel for the strings, but if you can feel them, the IUD has not been lost.

## **Infections**

- An infection after insertion is very rare, but it must be treated right away. Watch for the following signs of infection:
  - › pain in your lower abdomen (stomach area) that keeps getting worse
  - › bad-smelling vaginal discharge
  - › fever

If you notice any of these symptoms, contact the Clinic or go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.

**Call your primary health care provider right away if:**

- You have fever and chills after the IUD is inserted.
- You have unusual or bad-smelling vaginal discharge, or think you may have an STI.
- You have abdominal (stomach area) pain that does not go away after taking pain medication (such as Tylenol®).
- You have any concerns about heavier periods.
- You can feel the plastic of the IUD.
- You miss a period and think you may be pregnant.
- You want the IUD removed or reinserted.
- The IUD falls out.

## Lost strings

- If your primary health care provider can't see the IUD strings in your cervix at your first check-up, or at any future check-up, it could mean the IUD is still in your uterus, but the strings have gone into your uterus too.
- Your primary health care provider will order an ultrasound to look for the IUD. Use condoms until the IUD is found.
- If the IUD is in the correct place, you do not need to do anything – this means it is working. When it is time for the IUD to be removed, you may be referred to a gynecologist.
- If the IUD is not seen, it has likely been pushed out of your uterus. Another IUD can be inserted.
- Very rarely the IUD can move outside of the uterus. If this is seen on the ultrasound, your primary health care provider will arrange for safe removal of the IUD.



## **Periods**

- Your next period after the insertion may be normal, lighter, or may not come at all. For some women, their periods may become very light right way, for others it may take a few months. Remember, it is normal to have no periods at all while your hormonal IUD is in place.
- Every woman's body responds differently to their IUD. If you have questions or concerns, contact your primary health care provider.

## **IUD removal**

- Any primary health care provider who does Pap tests can remove an IUD. This is a very quick process if the strings are at the cervix.
- An IUD can be removed at any time. Your fertility will return quickly, often within a month after removal.

## **For more information, visit:**

- › [www.sexandu.ca](http://www.sexandu.ca)



### **Looking for more health information?**

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Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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*Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!*

[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

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If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.