

## Fact Sheet

### The Copper Intrauterine Device (IUD)

#### What is the Copper IUD?

The copper IUD is a method of birth control that is made of plastic and copper. It is shaped like the letter “T” and must be put into a woman’s uterus by a health care provider. It can stay in the uterus to prevent pregnancy for up to 10 years. This method of birth control is reversible, meaning you can get pregnant once you decide to stop using the IUD and a health care provider takes it out.

The copper IUD is the most effective method of emergency contraception if it is put into the uterus within five days of having unprotected sex.

#### How does the Copper IUD work?

The IUD stops sperm from moving through the uterus and reaching the egg. Sometimes the IUD may also stop an egg from attaching in the uterus and developing into a pregnancy.

#### How well does the Copper IUD work to prevent pregnancy?

The IUD works very well to prevent pregnancy. If 100 women use the IUD for one year, less than one might get pregnant. The copper IUD is one of the most effective birth control methods.

#### What do women like about the Copper IUD?

- The copper IUD is a very effective method of birth control.
- This method of birth control is reversible (not permanent).
- The copper IUD is private (no one but you needs to know).
- You do not need to interrupt sex to use a copper IUD.
- You can usually get pregnant soon after the copper IUD is taken out.
- The copper IUD can be used by women who cannot or do not want to use birth control methods that contain hormones, such as the pill, patch, ring, shot, implant, or the hormonal IUD.
- You will continue to have your monthly period while using the copper IUD.
- The copper IUD work to prevent pregnancy for up to 10 years, but you can have a health care provider take it out at any time you no longer want to use it.
- Women who are breast feeding can use the copper IUD.
- The copper IUD is the most effective method of emergency contraception if it is put into the uterus within five days of having unprotected sex.

#### What do women not like about the Copper IUD?

- The copper IUD DOES NOT protect you from HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
- This method should not be used by women who may be likely to get a sexually transmitted disease (STD) from their sexual partner.
- The copper IUD may cause changes in your periods like bleeding or spotting between periods, longer or heavier periods, or more cramps with your periods, especially in the first 3-6 months.
- The copper IUD must be put into the uterus and taken out by a health care provider, which can be uncomfortable and has risks.

## ABCD Family Planning

### What are the possible side effects of using the Copper IUD?

- Cramps, dizziness, or faintness when the copper IUD is put into the uterus
- Changes in your period like spotting, heavier or longer flow, and cramps, especially in the first 3 to 6 months
- Your partner may feel the IUD threads during sex
- More vaginal discharge
- Anemia if you have more blood loss during your period
- Back pain
- Rash

### Sometimes the Copper IUD can cause the following serious health problems:

- Rarely, when it is put in by your health care provider the copper IUD can go through the wall of the uterus (perforation), causing infection, scarring, or damage to other organs.
- The IUD can fall out of the uterus by itself leaving a woman at risk of pregnancy.
- If you get an STD while you use the IUD this could cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), an infection of the fallopian tubes. PID might cause future ectopic pregnancy, abdominal pain, and problems getting pregnant.
- If a pregnancy happens while the copper IUD is in the uterus, you should have an ultrasound to find out if the pregnancy is inside or outside of the uterus.
- ✓ DO NOT use the copper IUD if you have:
  - Cervical or uterine cancer
  - Pelvic inflammatory disease or an infection in your uterus after an abortion or delivery
  - Bleeding from your vagina that has not been evaluated by a provider
  - If you or your sexual partner has Chlamydia or gonorrhea
  - If you are pregnant
- ✓ Talk with your health care provider about whether the copper IUD is safe for you if you have:
  - Lupus
  - A certain type of organ transplant
  - AIDS

### Return to the health center as soon as possible if you have any of the following:

- Lower stomach pain
- Pain during sex
- An unexplained fever
- Heavy vaginal bleeding or bleeding that lasts longer than expected
- Vaginal discharge that is not normal for you
- Miss a monthly period or think you might be pregnant
- Cannot feel the IUD threads or the threads seem much longer
- Can feel any part of the IUD other than the threads (hard plastic)

**Contact your health care provider** if you think you may have a sexually transmitted disease (STD) or if you want to stop using the copper IUD and start using another method.

- To decrease your risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, use a latex condom every time you have vaginal, anal, or oral sex.
- Emergency contraception (EC) prevents pregnancy when used no later than 3–5 days after unprotected sex. If you need EC or want more information, call your health care provider, family planning counselor, or pharmacist.