

# ABCD Family Planning Fact Sheet Hormonal IUD

## What is the hormonal IUD?

The hormonal IUD is a method of birth control. It contains one hormone, a progestin called levonorgestrel. The hormonal IUD must be put into a woman's uterus by a health care provider. Once inside the uterus, the hormonal IUD will prevent pregnancy for up to 3 or 5 years, depending on the type. This method of birth control is reversible, which means you can get pregnant once you decide to stop using it and a health care provider takes it out.

## How does the hormonal IUD work?

The hormone in the IUD makes the mucus in a woman's cervix (the opening to the uterus) thick so that sperm cannot get into the uterus to reach the egg. It also thins the lining of a woman's uterus so that an egg cannot attach and develop into a pregnancy. Sometimes it prevents ovulation (the release of an egg from a woman's ovary).

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

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

## What do women like about the hormonal IUD?

- The hormonal IUD is a very effective method of birth control.
- This method of birth control is reversible (not permanent).
- The hormonal IUD is private (no one but you needs to know).
- You do not need to interrupt sex to use the hormonal IUD.
- You can usually get pregnant soon after the hormonal IUD is taken out.
- Some women may have less pain and bleeding with their periods.
- The hormonal IUD can be used by women who cannot use the copper IUD or birth control methods that contain estrogen such as the pill, patch, or ring.
- The hormonal IUD works to prevent pregnancy for up to 3-5 years, depending on the type.

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

- The hormonal IUD DOES NOT protect you from HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
- This method should NOT be used by women who are at risk of getting a sexually transmitted disease (STD) from their sexual partner.
- The hormonal IUD may cause changes in your periods like bleeding or spotting between periods, less bleeding with the period, or no period.
- The hormonal IUD must be put into the uterus and taken out by a health care provider, which can be uncomfortable and has risks.

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

- Cramps, dizziness, or faintness when the hormonal IUD is put into the uterus
- Changes in skin (acne, oiliness, darkening, rash)
- Breast pain or breast tenderness
- Headache
- Changes in mood, nervousness, or depression

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- Lower stomach pain
- Nausea or vomiting
- More vaginal discharge
- Back pain
- Changes in weight
- Less desire for sex
- Upper respiratory infection
- Ovarian cysts

### **Sometimes the hormonal IUD can cause the following serious health problems:**

- Rarely, when it is put in by your health care provider the hormonal 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 using the IUD (very rare), you should have an ultrasound to find out if the pregnancy is inside or outside of the uterus.
- ✓ DO NOT use the hormonal IUD if you have:
  - Cancer of the cervix, uterus or breast
  - 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 or think you might be pregnant
- ✓ Talk with your health care provider about whether the IUD is safe for you if you have:
  - Lupus
  - A certain type of organ transplant
  - Certain types of liver disease or liver tumor
  - 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 that lasts longer than expected
- Vaginal discharge that is not normal for you
- New or worse headaches
- Miss a monthly period or think you might be pregnant
- Cannot feel the IUS thread or the threads seem much longer
- Can feel any part of the IUS other than the threads (hard plastic)
- Develop breast cancer or a lump in your breast

**Contact your health care provider** if you think you may have a sexually transmitted disease (STD) or if you want to stop using the hormonal 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 5 days after unprotected sex. If you need EC or want more information, call your health care provider, family planning counselor, or pharmacist.