**WHAT IS AN IUD?**

An **IUD** is a type of birth control. It is a small “T-shaped” device that is put into your uterus by a health care provider. There are two types of IUDs available: the copper **IUD** and the Levonorgestrel-Releasing **IUS**.

**ADVANTAGES?**
- extremely effective birth control
- long-lasting & cost-effective
- light periods or no period at all
- lowers the risk for some types of cancer
- quick return to fertility after the IUD is removed
- fewer side effects than other hormonal birth control methods
- easier to use than most other birth control methods

**DISADVANTAGES?**
- may have irregular periods and spotting until periods stop
- may have more cramping and heavier periods (Copper IUD only)

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**WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Copper IUD</th>
<th>Levonorgestrel-Releasing IUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is it?</strong></td>
<td>(no hormones) Plastic “T-shaped” device with a ring of copper</td>
<td>(contains one hormone called progestin). Plastic “T-shaped” device with a ring of progestin</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>How effective is it?</strong></td>
<td>99.2-99.8%</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
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</table>
| **How does it work?**  | Copper changes the acid level inside the uterus making it less friendly to sperm and eggs | • Progestin thins the lining of the uterus making it hard for an egg to implant  
• Progestin thickens the mucous in the cervix making it harder for sperm to swim through |
| **Does it contain hormones?** | No                               | Yes                                           |
| **What are the common possible side effects?** | • more period cramps  
• longer periods  
• heavier periods | • less period cramps  
• shorter & lighter periods  
• irregular bleeding for first few months  
• period may stop |
| **How long does it last?** | Up to 5 years or more             | 3 to 5 years                                  |
| **How much does it cost?** | Approx $60-180                    | Approx $300-$400 (covered by many medical plans) |
HAVING AN IUD PUT IN

Having an IUD put in is a simple procedure done in a clinic by a health care provider. Tests for STIs and pregnancy will be done before the IUD is put in.

The IUD can be put in at any time in your cycle. It might be more comfortable to have it put in during your period.

Once the IUD is in place, there is a string that hangs out of your cervix (not your vagina). This is how the IUD can be checked and removed by a health care provider.

The IUD DOES NOT protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

STI testing is recommended yearly and when you have a new partner. You and your partner can get tested at a youth clinic or by your health care provider.

RISKS OF HAVING AN IUD PUT IN

- In some people, the IUD does not fit properly inside the uterus. This is not common.
- A pelvic infection can occur in the two weeks after having the IUD put in. This is uncommon. After two weeks, the risk of getting an infection is the same as people without an IUD.
- There is a small chance that the IUD will come out. If this happens you are not protected from pregnancy. You can decide if you would like to have a new IUD put in or use a different birth control method.
- When the IUD is put in, there is a very small risk of it puncturing the uterus. This is rare but will require further medical treatment.

HAVING AN IUD REMOVED

Having the IUD removed is a simple procedure and can be done at any time. The health care provider finds the strings and the IUD is taken out. Once the IUD is removed you are no longer protected from pregnancy.

WHERE CAN SOMEONE GET AN IUD?

If you are interested in getting an IUD please talk with a health care provider. You will need a prescription to buy the IUD from a pharmacy and then see a health care provider to have the IUD put in.

Youth clinic hours may change.
Find the youth clinic closest to you at www.vch.ca/youthclinics
Find the clinic closest to you at:
- www.vch.ca/youthclinics
- www.optionsforsexualhealth.org

Sex Sense Line: 1-800-739-7367 or 604-731-7803

For more copies, go online at http://vch.eduhealth.ca or email phem@vch.ca and quote Catalogue No. GE.131.158
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