Intrauterine Device Removal

(IUD Removal; Removal, Intrauterine Device; Removal, IUD; Copper Intrauterine Device Removal; Copper IUD Removal; Removal, Copper Intrauterine Device; Removal, Copper IUD; Hormone-releasing Intrauterine Device Removal; Hormone-releasing IUD Removal; Removal, Hormone-releasing Intrauterine Device; Removal, Hormone-releasing IUD)

Pronounced: in-trah-U-tah-rin dee-vice ree-MOO-vahl

by Marjorie Montemayor-Quellenberg, MA

En Español (Spanish Version)

Definition

An intrauterine device (IUD) is a type of temporary birth control for women. The device is usually used to prevent pregnancy. The hormone-releasing device may be used for other reasons. It is inserted into the uterus through the vagina by a doctor. The uterus carries the fetus during pregnancy.

A woman with an IUD may decide to have it removed. IUD removal is done by a doctor. You should never remove an IUD yourself.

Reasons for Procedure

There are two types of IUDs: hormone-releasing devices and copper devices.

The hormone-releasing IUD can be left in the body for 5 years before needing replacement. The copper IUD can be left in the body for 10 years. An IUD should be removed and/or replaced once it has expired.

Other reasons to remove an IUD may include:
• You get a sexually transmitted infection
• Side effects (eg, abnormal bleeding, pain)
• Heavy and/or prolonged menstrual bleeding
• IUD fails and you become pregnant
• You want to use a different birth control method
• You want to become pregnant
• Your menstrual periods have ended due to menopause
• You need treatment that requires the IUD to be removed

Possible Complications

Complications are rare, but no procedure is completely free of risk. If you are planning to have your IUD removed, be aware that cramping and bleeding may occur during the removal process. However, this is normal. Some women may experience fainting or near-fainting just after the procedure.

An IUD can be removed at any time, but it may be easier during a woman’s menstrual period, since the cervix (opening of the uterus) is softer. Once the IUD is removed, a woman is able to become pregnant again.

Note: If you have the IUD removed during the middle of your menstrual cycle and you had sex during the week before removal, you may be at risk of being pregnant.

What to Expect

Prior to Procedure

Your doctor will go over the steps to remove the IUD. This is also a good time to ask your doctor any questions regarding the procedure. It is important to think about what other type of birth control you will want to use once the IUD is out if you do not want to become pregnant. Sometimes you may need to start the other method before the IUD is removed.

Anesthesia

In most cases, no anesthesia is used. You might be given pain medicine or have an anesthetic applied to your cervix to ease any discomfort during the removal.

Description of the Procedure

This procedure is usually done in an office or clinic setting with no need for an overnight stay.

First, the doctor will insert a speculum into the vagina so she can see the cervix. The doctor may clean your cervix and vagina with an antiseptic, like iodine. Next, she will locate the strings attached to the IUD. The strings usually hang out from the cervix into the far back of the vagina. The doctor will ask you to take deep, slow breaths. It is important to relax during the procedure. Your doctor will use forceps or other tools to grasp the strings and gently pull the IUD out.

If you are having your IUD replaced, the new IUD will be inserted at this time.

There may be situations where it is difficult to remove the IUD. In these cases, your doctor may refer you to a specialist. There is a chance that the IUD may need to be removed using a hysteroscope. This is a long, thin telescope with a camera and tools on the end. The hysteroscope will be inserted into your vagina and uterus to locate and remove the IUD.
How Long Will It Take?

The procedure only takes a few minutes to set up and perform.

Will It Hurt?

You may experience cramping and bleeding while the IUD is being removed. This is normal.

Post-procedure Care

Be sure to follow any instructions your doctor gave you when you return home after the procedure. If you are starting a new contraceptive method, make sure you ask any questions about it. If you are going to attempt to become pregnant, begin taking prenatal vitamins.

Call Your Doctor

After arriving home, contact your doctor if any of the following occurs:

- Severe cramps, pain, or tenderness in your abdomen
- Fever or chills
- Unexplained vaginal bleeding or unusual discharge from your vagina

RESOURCES:

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
http://www.acog.org/

Planned Parenthood
http://www.plannedparenthood.org/

Women's Health.gov
http://www.womenshealth.gov/

CANADIAN RESOURCES:

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada
http://www.sogc.org/

Womens Health Matters
http://www.womenshealthmatters.ca/

REFERENCES:


Page 3 of 4
Copyright © 2012 EBSCO Publishing. All rights reserved.


Last reviewed December 2011 by Ganson Purcell Jr., MD, FACOG, FACPE
Last Updated: 12/30/2011