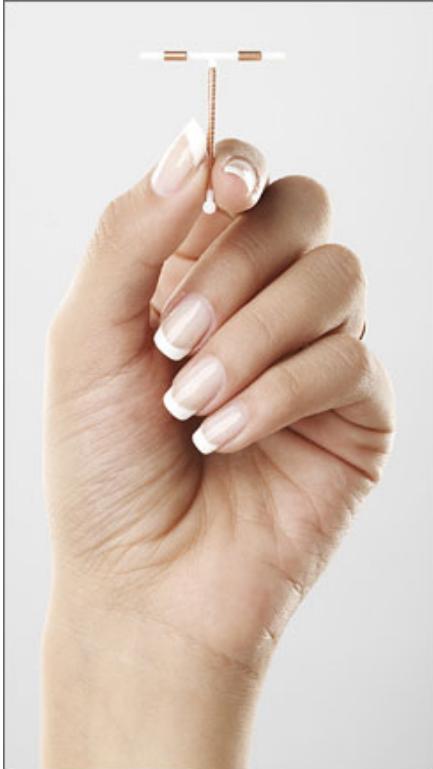


### What is the copper IUD?

Intrauterine devices (IUDs) are a long-acting reversible method of birth control. It is placed inside the uterus to prevent pregnancy. The copper IUD (ParaGard) is one of two IUDs available by prescription in the United States.



The other IUD has the progesterone hormone (Mirena). Intrauterine devices (IUDs) are among the safest and most effective contraceptive devices, and are commonly used worldwide. The copper IUD can be left in place for up to 12 years.

### How does the copper IUD work?

The copper IUD is a T-shaped plastic frame with two threads attached. It's inserted into the uterus to prevent pregnancy. Once in place, it prevents fertilization, as the IUD stops the sperm from getting to the fallopian tubes by changing the ability of sperm to move through the uterus and by killing the sperm.

### How effective is it?

The IUD is one of the most effective forms of birth control. The effectiveness for the copper IUD is more than 99%. Less than 1 woman in 100 will get pregnant using it. Perfect use is the same as typical use because the IUD requires no effort to keep using – it is

“forgettable” contraception.

### How to use the copper IUD

If you decide on the copper IUD, your doctor will do a pelvic exam, check for gonorrhea and chlamyda, and insert the device into your uterus. **You should expect some cramping when the IUD is first placed**, which gets better with ibuprofen (Motrin). Your IUD has strings which hang out of the cervix into the vagina. You cannot see the strings, and they will not cause problems when you have sex. When ParaGard needs to be removed, your doctor gently withdraws it by pulling on the IUD string. In rare instances the strings on the device may break, making IUD removal a more complicated procedure. After removal, you can get pregnant right away.

### Checking your IUD

We recommend checking your IUD after each monthly period. You may not be protected against pregnancy if you cannot feel the strings or if you feel any plastic.

### Does it have any side effects?

Common side effects associated with the copper IUD are increased vaginal bleeding and menstrual pain. This usually decreases by 3 months, and no change in your blood count is seen. Taking nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (Advil, Motrin, ibuprofen) helps with these symptoms. The copper IUD doesn't protect against STDs. There is also a small risk of spontaneous expulsion — meaning it could fall out — or moving through the uterine wall (perforation) during when it is placed (this occurs in less than 1 out of 1000 placements).

Serious side effects are rare, but ectopic pregnancies are a serious concern. They can be life-threatening. Women who use IUDs are much less likely to have an ectopic pregnancy than women who are not using birth control. But if a woman does become pregnant while using an IUD, it is more likely to be ectopic than if she was not using the IUD. For this reason, if you have new pain in your belly, unusual bleeding or feel faint, you should contact your doctor right away.

If you have an abnormally-shaped uterus, the IUD may not work for you.

### **IUD: Pros and cons**

The IUD is a long-lasting, safe and reversible means of birth control, but no birth control method is perfect. To help you decide if it's right for you, keep the following points in mind:

The IUD does NOT cause abortions.

The IUD does NOT increase your risk of ectopic pregnancy.

The IUD does NOT cause infertility.

The IUD does NOT increase your risk of sexually transmitted diseases or PID long term.

The IUD is NOT limited to women who are married or already have children.

The IUD is an excellent method for teens and adolescents.

### **Cost and availability**

The cost of a copper IUD depends on your insurance type, but most insurance plans will cover the cost completely. If you do not have insurance, it may cost \$400-700. However, there is no additional cost as long as you keep it in place. There are available programs that provide IUDs at NO COST if you do not have insurance coverage. Please ask your clinic about them.

Find more information here:

[www.larcfirst.com](http://www.larcfirst.com)

[www.choiceproject.wustl.edu](http://www.choiceproject.wustl.edu)

<http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-topics/birth-control/iud-4245.htm>