

LARC: Dispelling Myths

Long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) is safe for young women, but there are many myths out there about LARC use for teens.

Myth: Teens need parental consent to get LARC.

Fact: New York State explicitly allows minors to consent to birth control services, including LARC.

Myth: IUDs cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) and infertility.

Fact: Today's IUDs do not increase the risk of PID. In the 1970s, the Dalkon Shield IUD increased the risk of PID, which can cause infertility. Today's IUDs are different from the Dalkon Shield and do not increase the risk of these issues. We know this from decades of experience around the world.

Myth: IUDs are painful.

Fact: IUD insertion does cause some cramping, but this is usually taken care of by ibuprofen. Once the IUD is inserted, the person cannot feel that it is there.

Myth: IUDs are only for women who have already given birth.

Fact: Women who have not given birth can have IUDs. Some people have the idea that a woman who has not given birth has too small a uterus for an IUD. But, IUDs are small, about the size of two matchsticks forming a T. Before insertion, the medical provider measures the uterus to make sure that the IUD will fit properly.

Myth: Teens using LARC have a higher risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

Fact: Using LARC does not make a woman more likely to get an STI, but it doesn't stop STIs either. Sexually active women should still rely on condoms to prevent STIs.

Myth: IUDs cause abortions.

Fact: IUDs do not terminate pregnancies. They prevent sperm from fertilizing an egg. The copper in the Paragard® IUD kills the sperm before it can reach the egg. The hormone in the Mirena®, Liletta®, Kyleena®, and Skyla® IUDs increases cervical mucus and blocks sperm from accessing the egg.

Myth: IUDs tend to exit the uterus into the body.

Fact: Research shows that IUDs can come out of the uterus in 5% of cases. Most women can feel the IUD coming out. A woman can check for the IUD strings once a month as instructed by her provider.

These are only quick facts. You can learn more about LARC by talking to a provider and/or visiting www.Bedsider.org.

Adapted from Russo JA, Miller E, Gold MA. Myths and Misconceptions about Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC). *J Adol Health*. 2013; 52:S14-S21.

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