

## FACT SHEET: NON HORMONAL (COPPER) IUD

Intrauterine contraceptive devices (IUDs) are a form of 'physical' contraception. The non hormonal IUD contains no hormones whatsoever.

### What is a Non Hormonal (Copper) IUD?

There are hormonal IUDs available which control menstruation as well as providing excellent contraception. (see [hormonal IUD factsheet](#)) A copper IUD is simply a variation of an IUD which contains very fine, safe, medical-grade copper wrapped around a tiny plastic frame (about 3cm long).

The IUD sits in the uterus, like a pea in a pod. The IUD itself, cannot be felt by the woman who owns the IUD. The IUD is not attached to the body in any way and should be easy to remove by a health professional. Attached to the stem of the copper IUD is an ultrafine nylon thread.

This thread comes through the cervix and into the top part of the vagina. The thread is not visible on the outside of the body, and sits further up in the body than a tampon string. The thread may be felt by the woman who owns the IUD, if she chooses to feel for it, but a partner should not be able to feel the thread or the device during penetration or sexual intercourse.

### How does it work?

There are two types of copper IUD that have been approved for use in Australia. A copper IUD can last for 5 or 10 years. If you have a preference, you should tell your doctor. Your doctor will tell you which IUD has been inserted, and how long it will last.

The copper IUD is inserted inside the uterus by a doctor or nurse with experience performing the IUD insertion procedure. The copper in the IUD is incompatible both to sperm and the egg. This prevents sperm from fertilising an egg, which means that pregnancy is very unlikely to occur.

In addition, a uterus which contains an IUD, is unsuitable for a pregnancy to grow. Therefore, if an egg does get fertilised, it is unlikely to "find a home" inside a uterus where there is an IUD.

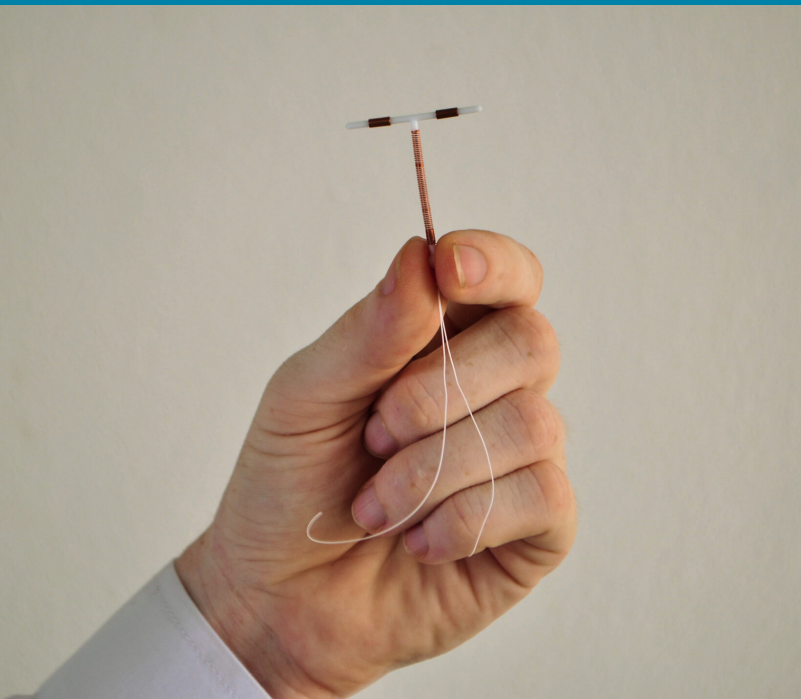


### Advantages of a Copper IUD

- Non hormonal
- Highly effective
- Immediately reversible
- Long lasting
- Cost effective

### Disadvantages of a Copper IUD

- Needs specially trained doctor to insert the IUD
- Up front costs are higher
- Periods may be more difficult to manage



## Who should not use a Copper IUD?

- Women with a pelvic infection should not have an IUD. However, once a pelvic infection is treated, she may be able to use an IUD.
- Women who have heavy, long or very painful periods should consider alternatives to the non hormonal IUD, as periods are likely to be less manageable with the copper IUD.
- Women with undiagnosed, abnormal vaginal bleeding should have this investigated before an IUD is inserted. See your doctor about this to find out the cause.
- Women at higher risk of sexually transmitted infection, ie those with multiple partners should use caution with any type of IUD. IUDs do not protect against infection.

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## Who is able to use a Copper IUD?

- The copper IUD is best suited to those women who want a long-term contraceptive, without any potential hormonal side effects. She may have already tried the hormonal IUD and found it to be unsuitable. The copper IUD is unlikely to suit a woman who already has heavy and/or painful periods.
- Some women are not yet ready to start a family and they want a reliable "set and forget" form of long acting contraception. Other women already have already had one or more pregnancies but want a reliable, easy form of birth control, which can easily be reversed if, and when, they are ready to consider another pregnancy.
- An IUD, hormonal or non hormonal, can be used safely, in women who have recently had a child ( vaginal delivery or caesarean section ) and also by breastfeeding women. Women who have not had any pregnancies or children are also suitable for an IUD.
- A copper IUD can be used for emergency contraception ( as an alternative to the "Morning After Pill" ) if it is inserted within 5 days of the unprotected sex.





## How do I get a Copper IUD?

Getting a copper IUD requires a consultation with a doctor or women health nurse, who will ask questions about your medical history and reasons for getting an IUD.

They may also perform a physical examination of your vagina. The actual procedure for inserting the copper IUD takes around ten minutes, but the time at the clinic is usually closer to an hour so that you can be monitored immediately afterwards for side effects. If you choose twilight sedation, you may be at the clinic for 2-3 hours. Some women may feel faint and get cramps after an IUD is inserted.

Over-the-counter pain relief and heat packs are recommended if there are cramps after an IUD is inserted. Nothing should be inserted into the vagina including having sex or using tampons, going swimming or taking baths for 3 days after the insertion procedure. After 3 days, you can resume all normal activities.

You should return to the inserting doctor if you have symptoms that concern you.



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## What should you talk to your doctor about?

- Contraceptive choices available to you; is a copper IUD a good option for you?
- What form of pain relief is suitable for you? Pain relief is recommended as IUD insertion can be mildly to very uncomfortable. Pain relief can be in the form of oral pain killers, a numbing gel to the cervix, pentrox "green whistle" or twilight sedation
- Your doctor will help you decide whether to have screening tests at the same time, such as cervical cancer screening or for sexually transmitted infection such as chlamydia.
- Who should insert your IUD? The insertion of any IUD needs to be done by a doctor who has had special training. Most of the doctors at Clinic 66 perform IUD insertion and removal.

## How reliable is the non hormonal (Copper) IUD at preventing pregnancy?

**Research has shown that the copper IUD is around 99.2% effective in preventing pregnancy. That leaves a 0.5% chance that a woman with a copper IUD will fall pregnant.**