



Patient Information

Intrauterine Contraception IUC Before your fitting appointment

What are the benefits of the intrauterine contraception methods?

The IUC provides very effective, long-lasting, contraceptive protection. How long it lasts will depend on the type of IUC inserted. The failure rate is less than 1 in 100.

Although a very effective form of contraception, its effects are quickly reversible after removal, and so it will not impact upon your future fertility.

When should you book an appointment for an IUC fit?

The IUC can be fitted at any time of the menstrual cycle, whether you are bleeding or not.

The IUC is only usually fitted when there is no risk of pregnancy.

Pregnancy can take up to three weeks from the time of conception to become apparent on a urinary pregnancy test.

Therefore, if you are using no regular form of contraception:

- In the three weeks prior to your appointment, you will need to either abstain from sex, or will need to be using another reliable method of contraception, consistently and correctly. Your healthcare provider will be able to recommend such a form of contraception.

If you are using a regular form of contraception different from the IUC:

- In the three weeks prior to your appointment, you will need to continue this form of contraception and take consistently and correctly. Should there be any errors – for example, missed pills – in those three weeks, it may not be possible to fit your IUC.

If you are already using an IUC method of contraception:

- If you wish to have another one, both the removal of the current IUC, and insertion of the new IUC, can usually take place during the same appointment.



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- Before you have your IUC exchanged, you must ensure you abstain from sex or use condoms carefully for the seven days prior to your appointment. This is because sperm can live for up to seven days, and your new IUC may take seven days to work. Unprotected sex in the previous seven days could therefore put you at risk of unplanned pregnancy.
- If your current IUC is in date it can be exchanged at anytime.
- If your current IUC has expired, you must not rely on it for contraception. Please speak to a healthcare professional about the option of starting additional contraception. So that pregnancy can be excluded at the time of your new IUC fitting, you must abstain from sex, or use another reliable method of contraception, consistently and correctly, for a minimum of three weeks prior to your appointment.

What should you do to prepare for your IUC fitting appointment?

- It is recommended that you have something light to eat before your appointment, and take a dose of both paracetamol and ibuprofen, as per packet instructions, 45 minutes prior to your appointment. This may reduce discomfort during the procedure.
- You may experience some vaginal spotting after the IUC fitting, and so you may wish to bring a pad or panty-liner to use after the appointment.

What will happen at your IUC fitting appointment?

- Your blood pressure will be taken prior to the procedure.
- An internal gynaecological examination will then be performed.
- You will be offered sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing at the time of your gynaecological examination.
- Should you require it, local anaesthetic may be applied to your cervix in order to reduce discomfort.
- A small introducer, containing the IUC, will then be passed through your cervix and the IUC positioned in your womb.
- Occasionally women may feel light-headed after the procedure, but we have ways to prevent, reduce or improve this, should it occur.



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We kindly ask that babies and children are not brought with you to the appointment.

What can you expect after your IUC fitting appointment?

- It is common to experience some lower abdominal cramping following the procedure, and so it is recommended you continue to take regular pain relief, as per packet instructions, if required and make plans for a restful day following your appointment.
- Some women may experience lower abdominal pain and vaginal bleeding for a few days following an IUC fit. It may therefore be appropriate to continue painkillers for 24-48 hours following the procedure. If these symptoms worsen after this time, or do not improve, please contact the clinic for further advice.
- Your ongoing bleeding pattern will depend on the type of IUC fitted.
 - With the copper IUC, you may experience regular, but heavier, and sometimes more painful bleeds.
 - With the hormonal IUC, you may experience some irregular or prolonged vaginal bleeding after the IUC is fitted. This most commonly occurs in the first three-six months of use. It is usually light bleeding and most often improves.
 - If you are unhappy or concerned by your bleeding pattern, please book an appointment to see us. There are treatment options available to help.

What are the risks associated with your IUC fitting?

There is a 1 in 20 chance of the IUC falling out after fitting. Most of the time, this will be noticed, but occasionally it can go unnoticed. This is why it is important to check for your threads regularly, as instructed by your healthcare provider.

There is a small risk of developing a pelvic infection in the first three months following the insertion of an IUC. This happens to about 1 in 100 women. Should you develop persistent lower abdominal pain, pain after sex, abnormal vaginal discharge or a fever, please seek advice by contacting the clinic, your GP or 111 promptly.

There is a very small risk that a small hole could be made in the womb, by the IUC, at the time of fitting. The risk is 1-2 in 1000. This risk is slightly higher if you are breastfeeding or within nine months of childbirth. Most of the time this will be noticed by the fitter and the procedure stopped. Occasionally this can go unnoticed by both the fitter and patient and this can result in the IUC being positioned beyond the



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womb. If this were to happen, it would require a procedure by the gynaecology team to remove it.

The chances of you becoming pregnant whilst using an IUC are low. However, should you become pregnant there is an increased risk it would be a pregnancy that occurs outside of the womb, an ectopic pregnancy. If you were to suspect you were pregnant, please seek advice by contacting the clinic, your General Practitioner (GP) or 111 promptly.

Reference: <https://www.fsrh.org/standards-and-guidance/documents/cec-ceu-guidance-implants-feb-2014/>

Contact Sexual Health Services

Telephone: 01793 604038

Website: www.swindonsexualhealth.nhs.uk/clinics

Opening times:

Monday 09.30-20.00

Tuesday 09.00-19.00

Wednesday 09.00-16.00

Thursday 09.00-19.00

Friday 08.30-11.00

Saturday 09.00-11.00

Smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds.

This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email gwh.pals@nhs.net

Document Control

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