FACT SHEET: COPPER IUD

Remember, the copper IUD **does not protect you from Sexually Transmitted Infections or HIV.** If you are looking for protection from STIs and HIV, both the internal and external condom are great options.

HOW DOES THE COPPER IUD WORK?

- The copper IUD is a T-shaped plastic rod that is placed in your uterus, with thin strings coming out of your cervix. It releases small amounts of copper. Copper kills sperm. Without live sperm, you cannot get pregnant.
- No method of birth control is 100% effective. Less than 1 in 100 people using the copper IUD for a year get pregnant.

HOW DO I USE THE COPPER IUD?

- A clinician places the copper IUD in your uterus.
- It can be removed at any time. It's usually removed by a clinician, but some people prefer to remove the IUD themselves.

WHEN DOES THE COPPER IUD START WORKING?

- The copper IUD works right after it is placed in your uterus.
- The copper IUD also works as emergency contraception. It may be placed up to 5 days after having unprotected sex to prevent pregnancy.

HOW LONG DOES THE COPPER IUD WORK TO PREVENT PREGNANCY?

- The copper IUD is FDA-approved for 10 years but works for 12 years.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO AFTER I HAVE THE COPPER IUD INSERTED?

- You don't have to do anything.
- Some people like to check their IUD's string after each period. To check, insert a finger into your vagina and feel for the cervix (it feels like the tip of your nose). You should feel the string near your cervix. Do not pull on the string.

WHAT DO PEOPLE LIKE ABOUT THE COPPER IUD?

- The copper IUD is highly safe and effective.
- The copper IUD has no hormones. It's a great option for people who prefer a method without hormones.
- It's a great option for people who want to prevent pregnancy for a long time. You can still remove the copper IUD whenever you want.
- You do not need to think about birth control before or during sex.
- The copper IUD is safe while breast/chestfeeding.

HOW WILL THE COPPER IUD AFFECT ME?

- You will not feel the IUD in you, though sometimes partners can feel it during sex. If this bothers you, you should talk with your clinician.
- You may have cramps for a few months after the copper IUD is placed.
- You may have stronger cramps and heavy, longer periods. Pain medication can help. To prevent cramps, take pain pills when your period starts and keep taking them every 8 hours for the first 2-3 days of your period. Follow the directions on the package. You can also put a hot water bottle or heating pad on your belly if you have bad cramps.
- After you remove the copper IUD, you can get pregnant right away.

WHERE CAN I GET THE COPPER IUD?

- At an appointment with a clinician.

IS THE COPPER IUD SAFE?

- The copper IUD is very safe. Serious problems are rare. If you have the following symptoms **within the first few weeks** after getting an IUD, call your clinician:
  - Fever (>101ºF)
  - Chills
  - Strong or sharp pain in your stomach or belly
- If you have the following symptoms **at any time** while you have an IUD in you, call your clinician:
  - Feeling pregnant (breast tenderness, nausea, vomiting)
  - Positive home pregnancy test

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