

Oak Bay Medical Centre

Patient Information: After Care for Copper IUD

When does it start working?

Now! What? Yes. Copper IUDs even work as a "morning after device" for 5-7 days after unprotected sex. This is much, much better than "PlanB" pills.

Maintaining your IUD:

Today:

Don't put anything inside for 24 hours

Why? Sex, tampons, swimming and bath/hot tubs could introduce bacteria from the vaginal canal to your uterus. While there isn't great medical evidence to clarify this, it seems reasonable to be safe.

This week:

Check inside with one finger to see what's normal for you

Why? IUD string or strings are hard to feel when inside. Like the sample you received, it is only about 2cm long. Some women cannot feel their cervix or the string, and this is OK. Finding out what is normal for you will help you monitor your own IUD. Some IUDs have only one string, some have two.

Monthly:

Check inside with one finger to check it is the same

Why? Rarely, the copper IUD can slip (~5%). This is normal. If it fails (extremely rare) you would get other symptoms like breast tenderness and nausea. Checking yourself will give you confidence there's no change.

Next few months:

You might get slightly heavier periods with cramping

Why? You may take 2-3 periods to adjust to the copper IUD. Over time, your periods often return to normal, but first you may get 2-3 heavier ones. Ibuprofen, Tylenol, or whatever you generally use for periods should help.

Periodically (every 1-3 years depending on your risk; your physician will counsel you):

Have a pap and well-woman exam

Why? Whoever does the pap can usually see the IUD string and check that your cervix is normal. Regular check ups are part of a healthy routine.

Reasons to call the clinic:

- » If you think the IUD has fallen out
- » If cramping is very severe, keeping you awake at night or preventing you from work/school even after you have taken ibuprofen or another anti-inflammatory.