

Handout: After a COPPER IUD insertion

By Dr. Roberto Leon, MD, FRCSC

Pain. Expect the cramping to continue for 1-7 days. The first day is usually the worst. A hot water bottle placed over your lower abdomen can help. Pain killers can be taken as needed. Ibuprofen 400 mg every 6 hours (Motrin or Advil) or Naproxen 220 mg to 440 mg every 8-12 hours (Aleve, 1 or 2 pills) are the best type of pain medication for the cramping. Tylenol 500 mg to 1000 mg every 4-6 hours can also be taken at the same time if Ibuprofen or Naproxen is not helping. Most women resume their normal activity within 1 or 2 days.

Bleeding. The first day you may pass some clots due to the insertion procedure itself. Some degree of bleeding or spotting is normal for a few days.

Physical activity. Exercise, working, walking is not going to dislodge the IUD. Resume your activities according to how you feel.

Sex. You can resume sexual activity when you feel up to it. No back up is necessary with Copper IUDs.

Follow up. The strings need to be checked in my office 6-8 weeks after the insertion. We will also discuss the general working of the IUD, especially bleeding, pain, sex and vaginal discharge. If need be, an ultrasound can be carried out to check the location.

Checking the strings. It is recommended that you check the string regularly. To do this, you must insert a finger into your vagina and feel around for the cervix, and then the strings. You can do this at any time, but doing it right after your menstrual period is easy to remember. If you feel the string is shorter or longer than it used to be - or if you don't feel the string at all - call the office. The IUD may have slipped out of place. Use another form of birth control until your IUD is checked. Most women don't bother checking it, and the strings will be checked while having your annual Pap smear.

Side effects and complications

Serious complications from use of an IUD are extremely rare. They usually occur during, or soon after insertion:

- **Perforation:** The IUD can perforate (or pierce) the wall of the uterus during insertion. This is very rare and occurs in only about 1 out of every 1,000 insertions. It is more common in women who had a C/Section or uterine surgery. There is usually intense pain in the first 1-2 weeks.
- **Expulsion:** The IUD can be expelled out (or pushed out) of the uterus into the vagina. If this happens, it is no longer effective. The chance is 2-5%.
- **Pregnancy:** Rarely (1%-1.5%), pregnancy may occur while a woman is using an IUD. If the IUD is still in place, there can be risks to the mother and fetus, like miscarriage, infection or ectopic pregnancy. The IUD should be removed as soon as possible.
- **Infections:** Infections in the uterus or fallopian tubes can occur after insertion. It is more common in the first 21 days. It is usually due to Chlamydial infection. If treated early, the IUD does not need removal.
- **Periods.** Your menstrual cycles will get heavier by 25-50%. The first 2-3 periods can be the worst. There are treatments available for it.

- **STD protection.** Although the IUD is an effective protection against pregnancy, it does not protect against acquiring STDs. If you and your partner are not in a relationship with only each other, use a condom every time you have sex. If you have a new partner, you should be checked for STDs 2-4 weeks after unprotected sex.

TROUBLESHOOTING: When to call the office or seek medical attention:

- Cannot feel the strings with your fingers
- Feel the "T" part of the IUD passing through your cervix
- Think you may be pregnant
- Missed, late, or unusually light period while using the Copper IUD
- You or your partner have been exposed to a sexually transmitted disease
- Severe cramps, pain, or tenderness in your abdomen
- Pain or bleeding during sex
- Unexplained fever or chills
- Unusual discharge from the vagina or sores on your genitals
- Unexplained vaginal bleeding

If you are concerned, please call the office. If the pain or bleeding is intense and you think that you are pregnant, or if you have pain and a high fever, you need to go to your nearest Emergency Department. IUDs are extremely safe, but rarely complications can occur.