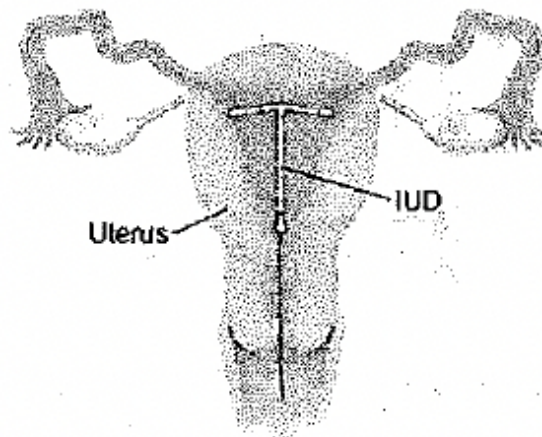


The Intra Uterine System (IUS for heavy periods)

**Your Questions
Answered**

What is the IUS?

This is a small, soft plastic, T-shaped frame, which carries a hormone releasing sleeve. The whole device sits inside the uterus (womb) and the wearer is unaware that it is there. It is designed to release a constant, low level of the hormone, progesterone, to the uterus.



How does the IUS make periods lighter?

When you have a period, the lining of the uterus is shed, and the heaviness of bleeding is largely determined by the thickness of uterine lining to be shed. The release of progesterone by the IUS thins the lining of the uterus, so that, after 3 or 4 months, there is less lining to come away and periods become much lighter.

How effective is the IUS?

Very. Studies show a reduction in blood loss of 95%, on average, after 6 months. In some women, periods may stop altogether.

Will I need to use additional contraception if I have the IUS fitted?

No. The IUS was first developed as a contraceptive device and is extremely effective this purpose.

How is the IUS fitted?

The IUS can only be fitted by a specially trained doctor or nurse. From your point of view, the procedure is similar to having a cervical smear taken, except that the IUS in its fitting device, needs to pass through the cervix (neck of the womb). The fitting device is only about the width of a drinking straw, and, although it can cause some crampy, sometimes severe, period pains when passing through the cervix, these will quickly pass. Your doctor may give you a mild sedative to relax the cervix if you are anxious or may use a local anaesthetic on the cervix if it is needed.

When is the IUS fitted?

Ideally, it should be fitted within 7 days of a period starting. If this is not possible to arrange, or your cycle is unpredictable, your doctor will advise you.

Can it be removed?

Yes, at any time, by a doctor or nurse who will pull on the threads to remove it. Removal is usually simple and painless.

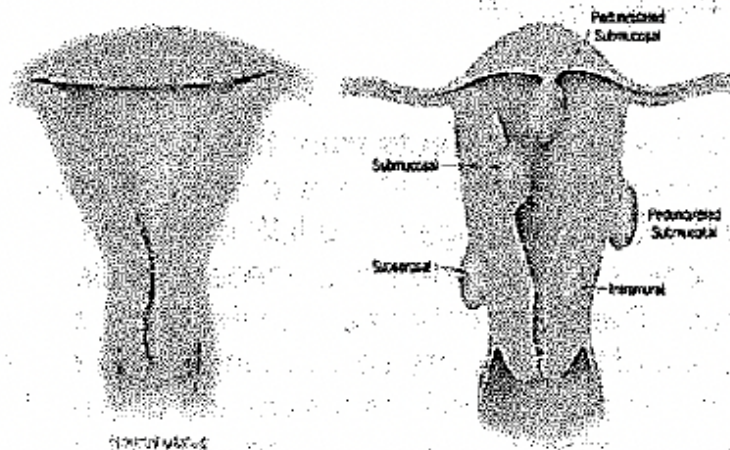
How long does it last?

The IUS should be replaced with a new IUS after 5 years. Your doctor nurse will check that it remains in the correct position every year.

My doctor tells me I have fibroids. Will the IUS help?

Fibroids are non-cancerous growths that form within the muscle tissue of the uterus. They are harmless in themselves, but cause problems because they can project into the cavity of the uterus. This causes an increase in the surface area of the lining of the uterus, so that the periods become heavier.

If the fibroids are not too large, then it is usually possible to fit an IUS, and it will reduce bleeding. It will not shrink the fibroids (they will shrink by themselves after the menopause) but will reduce the amount of uterine lining as explained above.



My doctor tells me my heavy periods are due to hormone imbalance. How will the IUS help?

The IUS is unlikely to affect your underlying hormone imbalance, by thinning the lining of the uterus, as already explained.

Does it matter if the IUS stops my periods altogether?

No. Even if the uterine lining becomes so thin that there is none to come away at period time,

your hormone, oestrogen, which is important to prevent osteoporosis (bone thinning).

How will I know when I reach the menopause?

Since lack of periods is not a reliable sign of the menopause if you have an IUS, you may have to rely on symptoms such as hot flushes or night sweats. If your doctor thinks it is appropriate, a blood test may be used as a guide to whether oestrogen levels are low as you would expect after the menopause.

Can I take hormone replacement therapy (HRT) if I have an IUS?

Yes. Your doctor will help you decide when and whether to start HRT.

What about side effects from the IUS?

Unlike over hormone methods to reduce heavy periods, the advantage of the IUS is that the hormone is placed where it is needed, inside the uterus. The levels of hormone in the bloodstream and rest of the body are very low indeed, and this minimizes any side effects outside the uterus. The main side effect can be prolonged bleeding or spotting, as already described, as the lining of the first 3 to 6 months after first fitting, but it virtually always settles. It is quite normal, and common, for periods to stop altogether. Other side effects are much less common and will usually pass. They include breast tenderness, headaches, and possible exacerbation of acne. Studies have shown no change in weight in women using the IUS.