



Choices

ABSTINENCE | CONDOMS | COPPER IUD | DEPO | MIRENA | PATCH | PILLS | PLAN B ONE-STEP | RING

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Choices Table of Contents

	PAGE
Abstinence	1-2
Outercourse	3
Withdrawal	4
Condoms: <i>Male</i>	5-7
Condoms: <i>Female (also called the single-use internal female condom)</i>	8
Dual Methods/Fertility Awareness Methods	9
Breastfeeding	10
Spermicides (Film, Foam, and Gel)	11
IUDs (Copper IUD (Paragard®), Hormonal IUDs (Mirena® & Liletta; Skyla & Kyleena)).....	12-13
Nexplanon® Implants (formerly Implanon implants)	14
The Quick Start method	15
“Get it and Forget it” or Long Acting Reversible Contraceptives (LARC) methods.....	16-17
Depo-Provera® Injections (“The Shot”).....	18-19
The Pill (Combined Oral Contraceptive Pills and Progestin-Only Pills)	20-21
The Patch	22
The Ring.....	23
Emergency Contraception (Copper IUD, Plan B One-Step)	24-26
Sterilization (tubal sterilization for women and vasectomy for men).....	27
Sexually Transmitted Infections	28-29
Choices at your Fingertips (2 pages describing ALL contraceptives)	30-31
Words, Words and more Words	32-34



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Chapter 9

IUDs



What is the copper T IUD (Paragard®)?

All available IUDs are safer and more effective than oral contraceptive pills [Dean, Schwartz. 21 ed. *Contraceptive Technology*]. Worldwide more women use intrauterine devices (IUDs) than any other reversible contraceptive. An IUD is a small device which is placed inside the uterus. The copper IUD is a simple T-shaped piece of soft, flexible plastic, wrapped with natural copper. The IUD has two very small strings that trail out through the cervix, which allow the woman to check that the IUD is still in place and allows her clinician to remove the IUD when she chooses. Once the IUD is in place, the copper is slowly released into the uterine cavity. Copper stops sperm from making their way up through the uterus into the tubes, and it reduces the ability of sperm to fertilize the egg. An IUD also prevents a fertilized egg from successfully implanting in the lining of the uterus if fertilization has occurred, though this is very rare.

A woman is more than **twenty times** more likely to become pregnant if she uses pills, patches or rings than if she uses an IUD or implant! It is estimated that over half of U.S. family planning clinicians use an IUD for their personal contraceptive needs.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES?	WHAT ARE THE DISADVANTAGES?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ IUDs are the most effective reversible method of birth control. ▶ The copper IUD is effective for at least 12 years. ▶ Only 2 out of 100 women using a copper IUD for 10 years will become pregnant. ▶ The copper IUD is the most effective form of emergency contraception. ▶ This contraceptive is very inexpensive when one considers the long years of easy use that a woman gets from it. In fact, over time, it becomes the cheapest (most “cost effective”) of all the reversible contraceptives. ▶ Use of an IUD is convenient, safe, and private. ▶ To “maintain” the IUD, all a woman has to do is check for the strings periodically. ▶ The copper IUD may be used by women who cannot use estrogen-containing birth control such as pills, patches, or vaginal rings. ▶ Women who have not had a baby can get an IUD and will have a rapid return of fertility after the IUD is removed [Dean, Schwartz. 21 ed. <i>Contraceptive Technology</i>, 2018]. ▶ The copper IUD may be inserted immediately following the delivery of a baby or immediately after an abortion. ▶ Some studies of IUDs have shown a decreased risk for uterine cancer. There is also some evidence that IUDs protect against cervical cancer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There may be cramping, pain or spotting after insertion. ▶ The number of bleeding days is slightly higher than normal and you may have somewhat increased menstrual cramping. If your bleeding pattern is bothersome to you, contact your clinician. There are medications which may give you a more acceptable pattern of bleeding and cramping. ▶ This IUD provides no protection against sexually transmitted infections. Use condoms if there is any risk. ▶ There may be a high initial cost of insertion. However, after 2 years, it is the most cost-effective of all contraceptive methods. ▶ The IUD must be inserted by a doctor, nurse practitioner, nurse midwife or physician’s assistant who is trained in the insertion procedure. ▶ A very small percentage of women are allergic to copper. ▶ Some men can feel the IUD strings with their penis during intercourse.

Where do I get an IUD?

You can get an IUD inserted by your doctor, nurse practitioner, nurse midwife, Planned Parenthood clinic or at a health department. Not all clinicians insert IUDs. Check in advance.

A woman is 20 times more likely to become pregnant if she

A Women's Fertility and her Menstrual Cycle:

Number of eggs throughout a women's life: ①

At 6 to 8 weeks of embryonic development	6 to 7 million
At birth	1 to 2 million
At time a woman has her first period	300,000
At age 37 or 38	25,000
At menopause (average 51.3)	1,000 or so
Average menstrual blood loss	30-40 cc (1.01 - 1.36 oz.)
A woman's capacity to become pregnant is falling as she ages.	

A. Menstrual Bleeding or menses ("periods") occur in women usually starting at age 11 or 12. Heavy or painful periods can be treated. This awareness can remarkably improve the quality of a woman's life. During the first month of Mirena use, a woman has more bleeding days than non-bleeding days. After six months, the average woman bleeds one day per month and loses 90% less blood. Menstrual blood loss decreases slightly in women using Nexplanon implants and increases somewhat in women using copper IUDs. Pills used for contraception also decrease menstrual pain and menstrual blood loss.

Menstruation is powerful, important and emotionally charged. When a menstrual period begins or fails to begin when expected it may cause a number of feelings: appreciation, anxiety, or fear are just starters. ②

The first day of bleeding may be a happy event for a girl who has been well prepared by her mom, her older sister or by a health educator at her school or church.

The first day of bleeding may be good news for a woman who does not wish to be pregnant but was less than perfect taking birth control pills over the past month. **The average woman on pills in our country misses 4.2 pills per month** making this cause of anxiety very common in the 11 million women using pills as their method of birth control.

If she is an active duty marine anywhere, failure to bleed for months at a time is just what a woman may have been trying to engineer using Depo-Provera injections, a Mirena IUD or by taking birth control pills every day (no placebo pills).

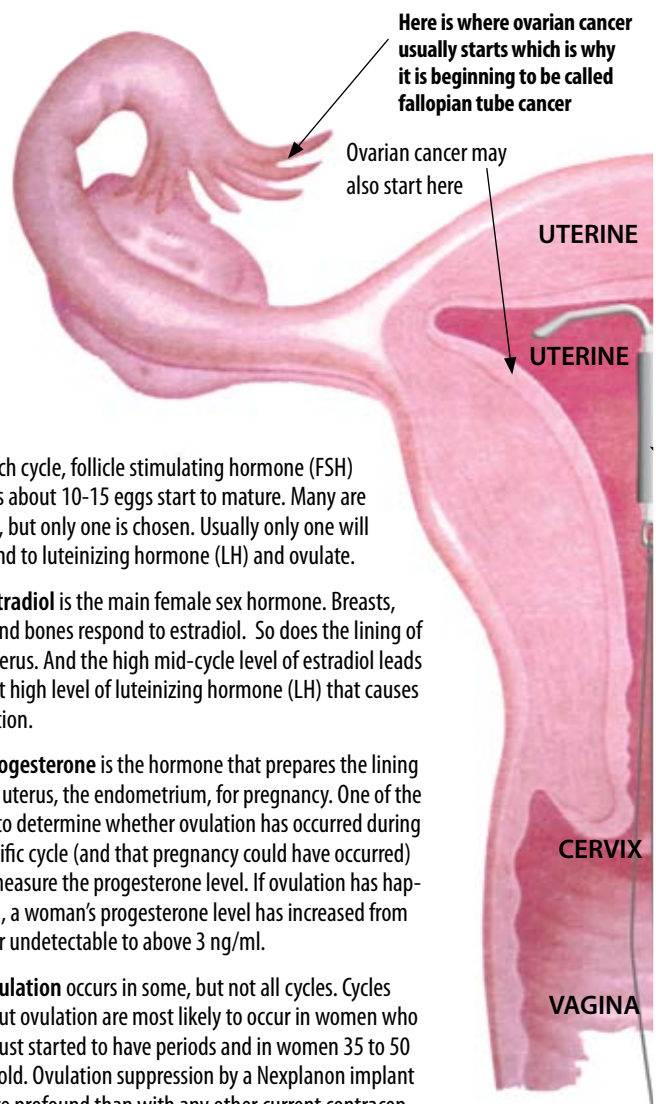
If she is about to take THE exam or be interviewed for THE job that will open or close the door to the career she has been dreaming about, the absence of a period may be encouraging to her.

If she is a dancer, actress or entertainer, the days just before menstrual bleeding or the actual days of bleeding may be very difficult for her. Consider two sentences from the book **IS MENSTRUATION OBSOLETE? ③**

"For dancers and actresses in television or films, the mind and mood changes, and difficulty remembering lines and gestures can make performing or filming on those days impossible.

Some of the most successful actresses have insisted on having clauses in their contracts releasing them from work during the premenstrual phase or during menstruation."

DO NOT take this to support the notion that women cannot function while they are on their periods. Most women can and do function quite well in all facets of life despite the potential problems posed by their menstrual cycle.



B. Each cycle, follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) causes about 10-15 eggs start to mature. Many are called, but only one is chosen. Usually only one will respond to luteinizing hormone (LH) and ovulate.

C. Estradiol is the main female sex hormone. Breasts, hips and bones respond to estradiol. So does the lining of the uterus. And the high mid-cycle level of estradiol leads to that high level of luteinizing hormone (LH) that causes ovulation.

D. Progesterone is the hormone that prepares the lining of the uterus, the endometrium, for pregnancy. One of the ways to determine whether ovulation has occurred during a specific cycle (and that pregnancy could have occurred) is to measure the progesterone level. If ovulation has happened, a woman's progesterone level has increased from zero or undetectable to above 3 ng/ml.

E. Ovulation occurs in some, but not all cycles. Cycles without ovulation are most likely to occur in women who have just started to have periods and in women 35 to 50 years old. Ovulation suppression by a Nexplanon implant is more profound than with any other current contraceptive. ④

In this diagram, the opening of the cervix into the uterine cavity measures about 1 cm. Before having a baby, the cervix is about 10 years of age have a cervix that is larger. A uterus this size is typical for a Mirena, Liletta



Do you have questions about all this?

Get all the answers at

www.managingcontraception.com

*LARC means... Long Acting Reversible Contraceptives. They have also been called 1 There are now 6 LARC methods: the Nexplanon implant, ParaGard IUD and the



Nexplanon Implant

The Etonogestrel Implant

Implants are inserted under the skin, where they remain effective for 3 to 4 years, maybe longer. Irregular spotting and bleeding improves over time. The total days of bleeding a woman experiences are diminished by Nexplanon. **No women ovulate in the first 30 months of using a Nexplanon implant.**



Mirena, Liletta, Skyla and Kyleena IUDs*

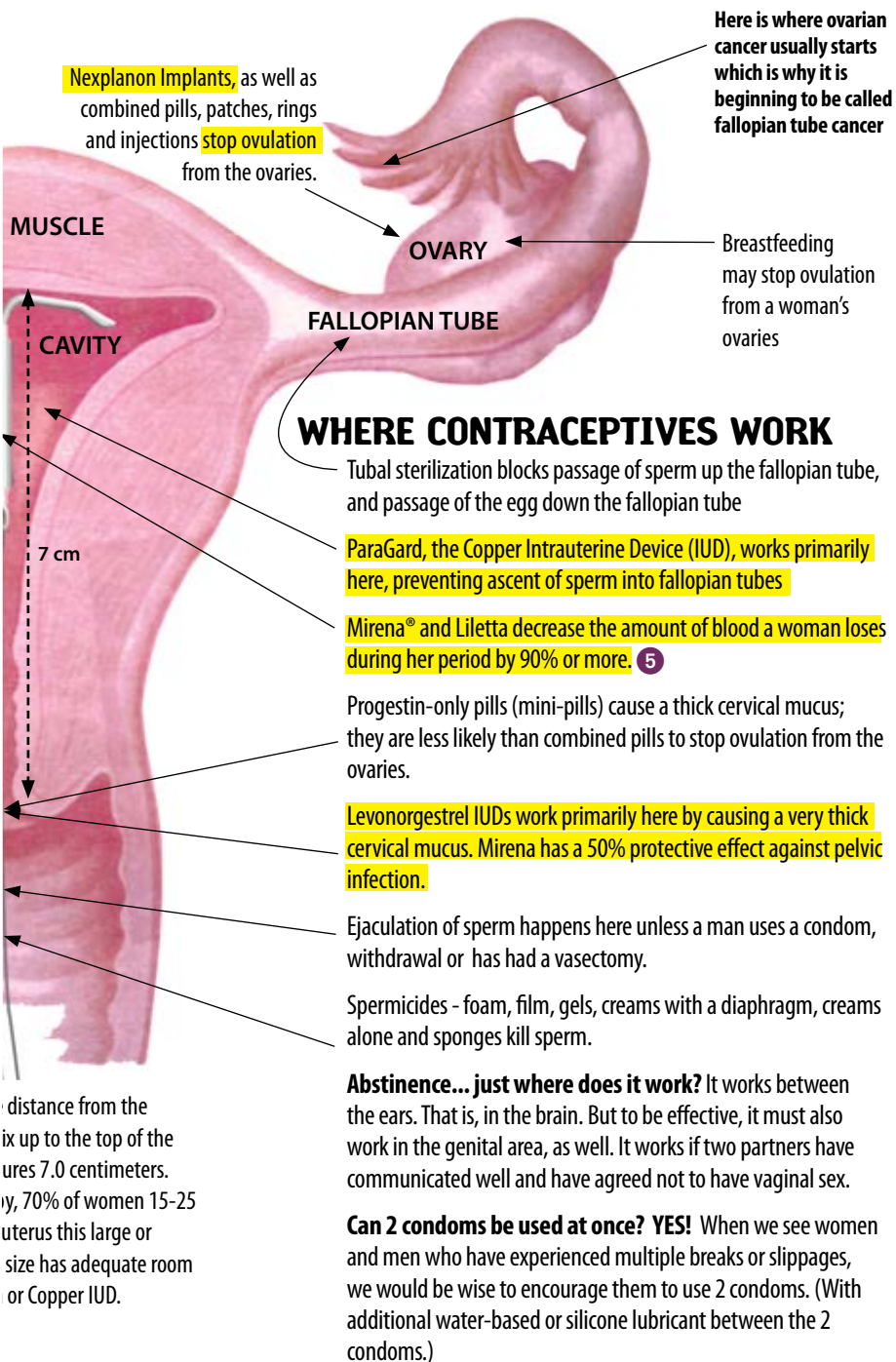
The Levonorgestrel Intrauterine Devices

These IUDs are placed into a woman's uterus, where they are effective for 5 to 7 years, maybe longer. Mirena has been shown to have many non-contraceptive benefits. It is used to prevent or treat menstrual pain, menstrual blood loss, endometrial cancer, uterine fibroids, endometriosis and dysfunctional uterine bleeding (DUB). After the first year, 50 to 75% of women using Mirena IUDs are ovulating.

*The two lower dose LNG IUDs are Skyla and Kyleena.

① Fritz MA, Speroff L. Clinical Gynecologic Endocrinology and Infertility. Eighth Edition, p.102. ② Allen AZ, The Menstrual Cycle in Managing Contraception 2017-2018. ③ Contraceptive Technology 21st Edition ④ Grimes DA, IN Hatcher, Trussell, et al, Contraceptive Technology 19th Ed., 2007: p. 147. ⑤ Fritz MA, Speroff L. Clinical Gynecologic Endocrinology and Infertility. ⑥ Westrom. ⑦ Vollmann RF 1967. ⑧ Speroff-Fritz 2001 p. 238. ⑨ Speroff & Darney 2001 A Clinical Guide for Contraception, 4th Edition. ⑩ WHO Collaborative Group

uses pills, patches or rings than if she uses an IUD or an implant.



MENSTRUAL PAIN:

Menstrual cramps and pain are serious.

How common is menstrual pain in Swedish 19 year-olds? ⑥

72% report painful periods

15% had to limit daily activities

8% missed school or work every cycle

38.2% regularly used medical treatment

Dr. Kate Miller (Univ of Pennsylvania) encourages women to recognize that "this monthly discomfort (cramps, pain, fatigue, irritability) is simply not obligatory." ⑦ All these contraceptives definitely may help: the Mirena and Liletta IUDs, birth control pills, rings, patches, injections and Nexplanon implants.

PELVIC INFECTIONS:

Infections of the fallopian tubes are serious sometimes causing chronic pain and infertility.

Number of episodes of pelvic inflammatory disease (PID):	Likelihood of both tubes being completely blocked: ⑧
1	11.4% or about 10%
2	23.1% or about 25%
3	54.3% or about 50%

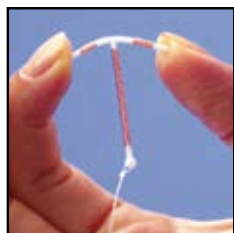
IUD implants do not cause pelvic infections. But ParaGard IUDs and Nexplanon implants do not prevent sexually transmitted infections. All women using a Mirena or ParaGard IUD should carefully consider using condoms as well to prevent infection.

7 MYTHS:

(Be sure to read these myths. Some may surprise you!)

1. Most women's cycles are exactly 28 days. No, only 12.8% ⑨ to 15% ⑩ of cycles are 28 days. About 20% of women using Mirena or Liletta IUDs stop having periods.
2. IUDs cause abortions. No, both Mirena and ParaGard IUDs prevent fertilization, thus preventing both spontaneous abortions (miscarriages) and the need for induced abortions due to unintended pregnancies.
3. Condoms are not effective at preventing sexually transmitted infections. WRONG: According to the CDC, condoms are highly effective vs. STIs, providing an essentially impermeable barrier to particles the size of STI pathogens. Women using the LARC methods, pills or rings should use condoms too!
4. Hormonal contraceptives cause cancer. DEFINITELY WRONG! Pills can prevent colon, ovary and endometrial cancer. Pills do not increase a woman's risk for breast cancer. ⑪ ⑫ Mirena IUDs prevent endometrial hyperplasia and endometrial cancer.
5. Women with fibroids cannot use a Mirena IUD. Mirena IUDs decrease fibroid bleeding and, perhaps, fibroid size. Fibroids distorting the uterine cavity may mean that an IUD cannot be inserted.
6. Women cannot use an IUD until they have had a baby. No, both the World Health Organization ⑬ and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) ⑭ consider the IUD an acceptable choice for women who have not had a baby. IUDs do not cause pelvic infections or ectopic pregnancies.
7. IUDs are just too expensive. This used to be true, but now in many settings, IUDs (and implants) are being provided at no cost at all or at close to no cost.

the "Get it and forget it" methods. 4 levonorgestrel IUDs.



ParaGard IUD

The Copper T 380-A Intrauterine Device

ParaGard is placed into a woman's uterus, where it is effective for 10 to 12 years, maybe longer. While causing increased bleeding and/or pain in the first several months, in the long run, ParaGard has minimal effects on the physiology of a woman's periods, including the likelihood of ovulation. ParaGard IUDs are, by far, the most effective emergency contraception and may be inserted within 5 to 7 days of unprotected sex. In a British study, not one of 1,963 women who received a ParaGard IUD for emergency contraception became pregnant. ⑮

Arthino EM, Is Menstruation Obsolete, 1999. ④ Nelson A., Craptree D. and Grentzer J., Contraceptive Endocrinology and Infertility. Eighth Edition, p. 579. ⑦ Miller K IN Is Menstruation Obsolete?, Lancet 1996. ⑮ WHO MEC 2009. ⑭ CDC US MEC 2010. ⑮ Godfrey BJOG, 2010.

ette 101, and this Contraceptive Options poster at www.managingcontraception.com.

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