

Intra uterine contraceptive device (IUCD)



The intra uterine contraceptive device (IUCD) or Intra Uterine Device (IUD) is a small device that is inserted in the uterus to prevent pregnancy. It is a long- acting reversible contraceptive method. There are many different types of IUDs, either containing copper or hormones.

Copper-T

Copper-T is a type of IUD that is commonly used in India. It consists of a plastic frame that resembles the English letter 'T' and has copper wire wound around it. This device is used commonly by women to give adequate space between two pregnancies. There are newer types of Copper-T that are now available such as Copper-T 380 A, MLCu-375. Of these, Copper-T 380 A is now commonly available in government health facilities. Different types of Copper-T have different durations of effectiveness. For example, once inserted, Copper-T 380 A prevents pregnancy for the next ten years.

All types of copper-T can also be used as an emergency contraceptive method. For more details refer to the leaflet on emergency contraception.

How does it work?

The Copper-T when inserted in the uterus, acts as a spermicide (kills sperms) and thus prevents the egg and the sperm from meeting each other. In spite of this, if fertilization does occur, the Copper-T also prevents the fertilized egg from implanting in the uterus and thus prevents pregnancy.

Who can use this?

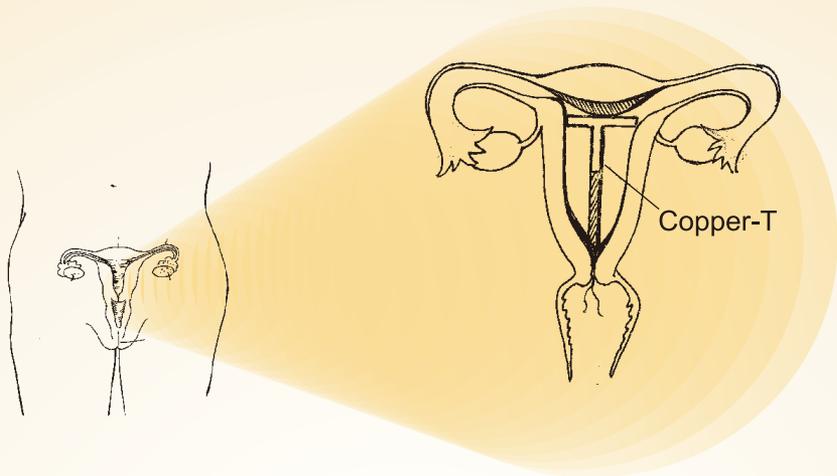
As it is long-acting and reversible, Copper-T is a suitable contraceptive method for those who desire to give adequate space between two pregnancies. Once the period of effectiveness of the device is past, the Copper-T can be removed and another one inserted in its place. For example, the Copper-T 380 A needs to be removed after 10 years, the Cu-375 after five years, and a new one inserted if one wants to continue using an IUD.

Where can one get Copper-T inserted?

Copper-T is inserted free of cost in government health facilities. The insertion of the device should only be done by trained health care providers. It is very important to adhere to adequate infection- control practices when inserting these devices in order to prevent the spread of infection to the woman's genital tract. Copper T is usually inserted between the fifth and tenth day after menstruation begins. This is because the cervix of the uterus is open immediately after a period thus making the insertion procedure easier. Also, since the woman has just finished a period, one is certain that she is not pregnant and that a device can be inserted inside the uterus.

How is Copper-T inserted

A special instrument is used to insert the Copper-T into the uterus. Before insertion, the Copper-T looks like a small rod, with the arms of the T bent. This small rod is inserted into the special instrument. The instrument is then introduced into the uterus and the Copper-T is released inside. Once released, the arms of the IUD open out inside the uterus to resemble the letter T. The instrument is then withdrawn outside. It is very important that all aseptic practices be followed during insertion, including washing of hands by the health care provider and use of sterile gloves and instruments. Otherwise, there is a danger of infection being introduced into the uterus.



What to expect during Copper-T insertion

- Most women experience no effects during Copper-T insertion.
- There may be some pain at the time of the insertion.
- Some women report experiencing fatigue, low backache and a feeling of weakness in the legs. Therefore, it would be good to have someone accompany the woman during the insertion.
- If possible, it is good to take rest on the day of the insertion of IUD.

When should Copper-T not be used

Copper-T may not be a suitable method for women with the following conditions.

- Women with symptoms of reproductive tract illnesses
- Women with irregular periods, especially if there is irregular bleeding between periods
- Women with persistent white discharge or reproductive tract illnesses
- Women with sexually transmitted infections or at high risk of such infections
- Women with cervical erosion
- Women with lumps in the uterus
- Women who have had ectopic pregnancy in the past
- Women who experience severe pain and heavy bleeding during periods
- Women with severe anaemia

Adverse Effects

- It is very important to remember that IUD is not a suitable method for all women.
- Most women report having prolonged or heavy bleeding during periods following insertion of Copper-T. Usually, this gets better over time. But if this persists even after a few months, then it is advisable to seek medical opinion and if required, remove the Copper-T, and choose an alternative contraceptive method.
- Immediate medical attention should be sought if there are problems like burning sensation in the vagina, white discharge with foul smell, bleeding in between periods. Some of these problems may require removal of Copper-T.
- Rarely, it is possible for pregnancy to occur even when one is using a Copper-T. Since there is a higher chance of ectopic pregnancy when one conceives with a Copper-T, it is important to seek medical attention immediately if one misses a period and test for pregnancy. Delay in diagnosing an ectopic pregnancy can result in rupture of the fallopian tubes and can be life-threatening.



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