

**Albany Family Medicine  
Community Care Physicians  
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**How to prepare for IUD insertion**

**Reminders to help the IUD insertion go smoothly and comfortably:**

- You may have a support person who is welcome to be with you during the procedure.
- Plan on minimal activity for several hours after the procedure.
- Please eat your regular meals before the appointment and take all of your medications as you normally would. You do not need to have an empty stomach for this procedure.
- Wear comfortable clothing with underwear that will accommodate a pad.
- You may have mild sedation in the form of a pill. This needs to be arranged in advance. Many people find that this is not necessary, but it is an option. This pill will need to be prescribed to your pharmacy before the appointment and taken about one hour before the procedure, and you will need to have someone accompany you to the office and back home. Please send a portal message to your provider or contact the office if you would like this option.
- If you need to reschedule your appointment, please call 518-207-2273 at least 24 hours in advance. You do NOT need to reschedule if you are having your period.
- Avoid unprotected sex for 2 weeks before your IUD insertion so there's minimal chance of an unplanned pregnancy.

It is OK to have your IUD inserted while you're on your period. It may make the insertion less painful because the cervix is slightly dilated during your period.

**What happens during the IUD insertion process?**

Getting an IUD for the first time may feel daunting, so it can help to know what to expect during the appointment. Here's a breakdown of the general steps:

- When you arrive, be ready to give a urine sample for a pregnancy test.
- You will talk with your provider about the insertion process, and discuss the different types of IUDs if you haven't already done that. You will go through the consent form with the provider and be given the opportunity to ask any questions.
- After that you will be asked to undress from the waist down.

- Your provider will then insert a lubricated speculum into your vagina. This part is very similar to a pelvic exam or pap smear. A speculum is a metal or plastic device that's shaped like a duck's bill. It slides in closed, and then it opens slightly to open up the vagina so your provider can see the cervix (the opening of the uterus). This feels like pressure in the vagina, but it doesn't cause pain for most people.
- The speculum stays open while your provider places the IUD through the cervix into the uterus. Be prepared to feel several moments of pressure on the cervix and higher in the uterus while this happens. You may feel mild to moderate cramps throughout the whole process, especially if your provider needs to open up your cervix to get the IUD in the right position. Most of the time the cramping lasts for 10 seconds or less.
- After they place the IUD, your provider will trim the strings that extend from the IUD.
- Some people may need pressure applied to their cervix to stop any bleeding that can occur. Bleeding is a normal reaction to irritation of the cervix during IUD insertion.
- Finally, your provider will remove the speculum. At that time, you can sit up or keep lying down if you need to.

### **Does it hurt to get an IUD inserted?**

It's normal to feel some pain with an IUD insertion. Most people feel a range of sensations, from mild discomfort to nausea, dizziness, or even severe cramping. The pain may be more tolerable if you've previously had a vaginal delivery. This is because the cervix is already slightly open as a result of childbirth.

Taking an NSAID like ibuprofen or naproxen, or another pain medication like acetaminophen can be helpful. Sometimes providers recommend taking one before the procedure and one afterward.

The most painful part of IUD insertion is usually over in 10 seconds or less.

### **Side effects after IUD insertion**

Most people feel some mild cramps during and right after an IUD insertion. Some people may even feel a little dizzy. Lying down for a few minutes after the insertion is over can help with recovery.

Here are some commonly reported side effects after IUD insertion:

- Cramping for a few hours to a few days
- Spotting
- Dizziness
- Fainting (this is rare)

Cramping and spotting can last for a few minutes to a few weeks. Try using a heat pad on the lower belly and taking over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen to help with the cramps. The good news is that the symptoms gradually lighten and improve with time.

If you have unusual abdominal or pelvic pain the day after your IUD insertion, first check if you can feel the IUD strings to see if it may have moved. If this pain lasts more than a few hours please call the clinic.

### **How does an IUD affect your period?**

You might notice that your period changes after getting an IUD. Usually it's for the better — but not always.

It is normal to have some spotting after an IUD insertion. Usually it lasts only a few days, or it could come and go for up to 6 months.

With a hormonal IUD, many people notice that spotting stops and their periods become lighter over time. The timing may also become a little more erratic. But, for most people, it's not a problem since the bleeding is quite light. You may even completely stop getting a period.

The nonhormonal copper IUD might have the opposite effect. It can make your period heavier or last longer and may cause more cramping. Again, these side effects are usually worse in the first few months after IUD insertion, and often resolve over time.

### **YOU SHOULD CALL YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER IF YOU HAVE:**

- Fever >101° F
- Bright red, heavy bleeding which is more than what you have with your period
- Bad cramps or pain that does not improve with over-the-counter medications, such as ibuprofen
- Bad-smelling, yellowish vaginal discharge