

## IUD and Implant: Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC)

### What are *long-acting reversible* contraception (LARC) methods?

- ❖ Long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) methods include
  - the *intrauterine device (IUD)*
  - *birth control implant*.
- ❖ Both methods are highly effective in preventing pregnancy, last for several years, and are easy to use.
- ❖ Both are reversible—if you want to become pregnant or if you want to stop using them, you can have them removed at any time.

### How effective are LARC methods?

The IUD and the implant are the *most effective forms of reversible birth control* available. During the first year of typical use, fewer than 1 in 100 women using an IUD or an implant will become pregnant. *This rate is in the same range as that for sterilization.*

### How do LARC methods compare with other methods of contraception?

Over the long term, LARC methods are 20 times more effective than birth control pills, the patch, or the ring.

### What is the intrauterine device (IUD)?

- ❖ The IUD is a small, T-shaped, plastic device that is inserted into and left inside the uterus. There are two types of IUDs:
  - The *hormonal IUD releases progestin*.
  - One hormonal IUD is approved for use for up to 5 years (Mirena).
  - Another is approved for use for up to 3 years (Skyla).
- ❖ The copper IUD
  - *does not contain hormones*.
  - It is approved for use for up to 10 years (ParaGard).

## How does the IUD work?

- ❖ Both types of IUDs work mainly by preventing fertilization of the egg by the sperm.
- ❖ The hormonal IUD also thickens cervical mucus, which makes it harder for sperm to enter the uterus and fertilize the egg, and keeps the lining of the uterus thin, which makes it less likely that a fertilized egg will attach to it.

## What are the benefits of the IUD?

The IUD has the following benefits:

- Once it is in place, you do not have to do anything else to prevent pregnancy.
- No one can tell that you are using birth control.
- It does not interfere with sex or daily activities.
- It can be inserted immediately after an abortion, a miscarriage, or childbirth and while breastfeeding.
- Almost all women are able to use an IUD.
- If you wish to become pregnant or if you want to stop using it, you can simply have the IUD removed.
- The hormonal IUD helps decrease menstrual pain and heavy menstrual bleeding.
- The IUD is less expensive than most other forms of contraception.

## Who should use an IUD?

- ❖ The IUD is best for a woman who is in a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who does not have any sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- ❖ This is important because the IUD does not protect against STIs.
- ❖ STIs can increase a woman's risk of becoming infertile.
- ❖ If you are using an IUD and believe you may be at risk of getting an STI, use a latex condom to help protect yourself.

## How is the IUD inserted?

- A health care provider must insert and remove the IUD.
- We review your medical history and will perform a pelvic exam.
- To insert the IUD,
  - ❖ we put the IUD in a *slender plastic tube*.
  - ❖ The tube is placed *into the vagina* and guided *through the cervix into the uterus*.
  - ❖ The *tube is withdrawn*, leaving the IUD in place.

## Will I feel anything when the IUD is inserted?

- Insertion of the IUD may cause *some discomfort*. Taking over-the-counter pain relief medication before the procedure may help.
- The IUD has a string made of thin plastic threads. After insertion, the strings are trimmed so that 1–2 inches extend past the cervix into your vagina.
- The strings should not bother you.
- Your partner will not feel the strings.

## What are possible side effects of use of the IUD?

### With the copper IUD,

- menstrual pain and bleeding may increase.
- Bleeding between periods may occur.
- Both effects are common in the first few months of use.
- Pain and heavy bleeding usually decrease within 1 year of use.

### Both hormonal IUDs

- may cause spotting and irregular bleeding in the first 3–6 months of use.
- The amount of menstrual bleeding and the length of the menstrual period usually decrease over time.
- Menstrual pain also usually decreases.
- A few women also may have side effects related to the hormones in these IUDs.
- These side effects may include headaches, nausea, depression, and breast tenderness.

## Can the IUD fall out of the uterus?

It is possible, although rare, that the IUD can become dislodged.

- *If you or your partner can feel the plastic part of the device, it means your IUD has slipped out of place.*
- If you have any doubts about the presence or the position of your IUD, use a latex condom and call the office for instructions.
- You should be able to feel the strings by the cervix.

## What are possible risks of use of the IUD?

Serious complications from use of an IUD are rare. However, some women do have problems. These problems usually happen during or soon after insertion:

- The IUD may come out of the uterus.
  - This happens in about 5% of users in the first year of using the IUD.
- The IUD can perforate (or pierce) the wall of the uterus during insertion.
  - It is rare and occurs in only about 1 out of every 1,000 insertions.
- Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) is an infection of the uterus and fallopian tubes.
  - PID may cause scarring in the reproductive organs, which may make it harder to become pregnant later.
  - The risk of PID is only slightly increased in the first 20 days after insertion of

an IUD, but the overall risk still is low (fewer than 1 in 100 women).

- Rarely, pregnancy may occur while a woman is using an IUD.
- In the rare case that a pregnancy occurs with the IUD in place, there is a higher chance that it will be an ectopic pregnancy.

## Some Common myths about the IUD

### "IUDs cause infection"

**The truth** is that IUD's do not cause infection. STI's do. Bacteria entering the womb during insertion are usually the cause of infection. However, an IUD may increase the risk of getting an STI if you change sexual partners frequently

### "IUDs cause ectopic pregnancy"

**False**.....Overall, the ectopic risk is 5% but more women get an ectopic pregnancy who have no birth control than women with an IUD.

### "IUDs can make you sterile"

**False**.....The truth is the IUD does not affect your ability to have a future pregnancy. Sexually transmitted disease are usually the cause of the problem. As with oral contraceptives and barrier methods, most women who stop using IUD's are able to conceive within the first year after removal.

### "IUDs work by causing an abortion"

**False**.....The latest evidence suggests that IUD's work by preventing fertilization. Therefore, the IUD does not cause an abortion.

## What is the birth control implant?

The birth control implant is a single flexible rod about the size of a matchstick that is inserted under the skin in the upper arm.

- ❖ It releases progestin into the body.
- ❖ It protects against pregnancy for up to 3 years.

## How does the birth control implant work?

- The progestin in the implant prevents pregnancy mainly by stopping ovulation.
- In addition, the progestin in the implant thickens cervical mucus, which makes it harder for sperm to enter the uterus and fertilize the egg.
- Progestin also keeps the lining of the uterus thin, making it less likely that a fertilized egg will attach to it.

## What are the benefits of the birth control implant?

The implant has the following benefits:

Once it is in place, you do not have to do anything else to prevent pregnancy.

- No one can tell that you are using birth control.
- It can be inserted immediately after an abortion, a miscarriage, or childbirth and while breastfeeding.

- It does not interfere with sex or daily activities.
- Almost all women are able to use the implant.
- If you wish to become pregnant or if you want to stop using it, you can simply have the implant removed.

## How is the birth control implant inserted?

The implant is inserted into your arm by a health care provider.

- A small area on your upper arm is numbed with a local anesthetic.
- No incision is made.
- Your health care provider places the implant under the skin with a special inserter.
- The procedure takes only a few minutes.

## How is the birth control implant removed?

- To remove the implant, your health care provider again numbs the area.
- One small incision is made.
- The implant then is removed.

## What are possible side effects of use of the birth control implant?

The most common side effect of the implant is

- unpredictable bleeding. For some women, these bleeding patterns improve over time.
- Some women have less menstrual pain while using the implant.
- In some women, bleeding stops completely.
- Other common side effects include mood changes, headaches, acne, and depression. Some women have reported weight gain while using the implant, but it is not clear whether it is related to the implant.

## What are possible risks of use of the birth control implant?

Possible risks include

- problems with insertion or removal of the implant.
- These problems occur in less than 2% of women.
- Although rare, if a woman becomes pregnant while the implant is inserted, there is a slightly increased risk that it will be an ectopic pregnancy.