

Advice to patients before fitting of a Coil – this may be an IUD (“Intrauterine Device”) or IUS (“Intrauterine System” or “Mirena”)

PLEASE NOTE – when booking an appointment for this procedure, you must tell reception that you are booking a coil fitting as a DOUBLE APPOINTMENT is required.

Essential Information

Coil fitting is normally a straightforward procedure however it is important that you are aware of the following advice before proceeding to book an appointment.

A coil is a T-shaped device that offers more than 99% effective and reliable contraception. The IUD contains copper but no hormones, and can work for 5 or 10 years depending on the type. Periods are usually heavier than before. The IUS contains the hormone Progesterone which protects against pregnancy and also reduces blood loss to almost zero. The IUS can work for up to 8 years for contraception, and for 5 years when used as part of HRT.

The effects of all coils are quickly reversible on removal of the device and there are no lasting effects on fertility or bleeding pattern.

A copper IUD fitted after age 40 can be left and provides effective contraception until after the menopause.

An IUS fitted after age 45 can be left and provides effective contraception until after the menopause, unless HRT is required in which case it needs to be renewed after 5 years.

If you have any worries please do not hesitate to discuss your concerns and we will try our best to reassure you. There are three coil-fitters at the practice: Dr Amanda Sutton, Dr Anna Rosen and Dr Natasha Smeaton.

What are the risks?

Infection: coils do not cause infection but if you are already carrying an infection there is a slightly increased risk of pelvic infection in the first three weeks after insertion. If you think you may be at risk of infection, particularly with Chlamydia, then you should ask for a self-swab to check for this 2 weeks prior to the fitting.

Perforation: This rare complication affects less than 2 women per 1000 fittings, and occurs when the device goes through the wall of the uterus. It is increased in women who have recently had a Caesarian Section, in those who have recently given birth, or in those who are in the first year of breastfeeding.

Expulsion: The coil can sometimes be expelled, most commonly during a heavy period. You will be shown how to feel for the “threads” so that you can tell if it is still present.

Ectopic Pregnancy: the risk of pregnancy is extremely low however a coil cannot prevent an ectopic pregnancy (in the Fallopian tube).

Vasovagal: Occasionally your blood pressure and heart rate can drop during or after a coil fitting and you may feel faint. This usually resolves quickly but very occasionally an injection of medication is needed to help.

Preparing for a Coil Fitting

Timing:

A coil can be fitted at any time **as long as there is no risk of pregnancy.**

It is best fitted towards the end of your period as we can then be sure that you are not pregnant and your cervix tends to be more relaxed at this time.

If you are coming at any other time, we will need you to confirm that there is no risk of pregnancy. You must use contraception carefully. If you have unprotected intercourse in the **3 weeks** before your appointment then the coil fitting will be delayed until pregnancy can be reliably excluded. You will be asked to provide a pregnancy test done same day if this is the case, or you will need to cancel and rebook when you have excluded pregnancy.

Any coil can be fitted from 4 weeks after giving birth and does not affect breastfeeding. If you have had a Caesarian your doctor may wish to delay coil fitting until at least 3 months post natal. Please discuss with one of the coil fitters.

New Fitting:

Avoid unprotected intercourse or abstain after your last period to ensure that there is no risk of pregnancy (unless you are using a reliable method of contraception eg the pill, implant, injection).

A non-hormonal IUD can be used as emergency contraception if certain criteria are met.

Removal and refit:

Avoid unprotected intercourse or abstain within the **7 days** before your appointment. This is important because sperm can live for five days, and occasionally a new coil cannot be refitted on the same day due to a tightening of the cervix on removing the existing coil. If live sperm are present, there can be a risk of pregnancy. A further appointment will then be given to attempt fitting again.

Switching contraception:

If already using the pill, patch, ring, implant or injection continue using these until the appointment date. You may be advised to continue them for a short time afterwards too.

A coil can be fitted at any time if these methods are used consistently beforehand.

Important Tips

Most fittings are very straightforward but we know that there is a lot of information which may sound alarming online or on social media! Remember, we can stop at any time if you want us to.

Make sure to eat and drink before your fitting appointment – feeling faint is more common if you have not eaten.

Take a simple painkiller like ibuprofen 400mg or paracetamol x2 an hour before the appointment.

Allow plenty of time for the appointment – although the procedure only takes 5-10 minutes you may need a little time afterwards – avoid strenuous activity after the fitting.

When is the coil effective?

Non-hormonal IUD – immediately

Hormonal IUS – fitted up to day 7 of a natural cycle – immediately

Hormonal IUS – fitted after day 7 of a natural cycle – 7 days of extra precautions needed

What to expect after fitting

Common symptoms:

A little bleeding is common for up to a few days afterwards. We recommend you use a pad and avoid tampons for 3 days after fitting, to reduce risk of infection.

Mild cramp-like abdominal pain is common for a few days after fitting. Ibuprofen or paracetamol will help.

We advise you avoid sexual intercourse for three days after fitting, to reduce risk of infection.

IUS – irregular bleeding for the first 3-6 months can occur but usually settles with time.

IUD – periods may be heavier and longer.

If any bleeding becomes troublesome, please call the practice as there are medications that can help.

If abdominal pain worsens, you develop offensive vaginal discharge or a fever, or have any concerns, please phone the practice.

Checking threads:

Check your coil threads 4-6 weeks after fitting and regularly thereafter.

If you cannot feel the threads or if you can feel a hard plastic stem then use an alternative contraceptive and call the practice for advice.

Follow up: Routine follow up is not required but make a note of your renewal date.