# THE MIRENA IUS

If you are interested in the IUS (Mirena coil) this leaflet will hopefully answer any questions you may have. It will explain the benefits and risks as well as what you can expect at your fitting appointment with Dr O’Dair.

**What exactly is the IUS (Mirena coil) ?**

IUS stands for intra-uterine system and is one of the long acting reversible methods of contraception on offer. At Bilbrook Medical Centre the type of IUS we fit is called a Mirena coil. This is the most effective form of IUS.

The Mirena IUS is a small plastic T-shaped device that is inserted into your uterus (womb).

Unlike a standard IUD (intra-uterine device) it does not contain copper but does have a hormone called levonorgestrel (a type of progestogen) in it.

This hormone is similar to the natural progesterone in your body. It is released slowly into the uterus (womb) and keeps the lining very short (this prevents pregnancy and reduces heavy bleeding).

The device has two fine soft threads that come through the cervix opening (neck of the womb) so that the Mirena IUS can be checked and removed when needed

**What is the Mirena IUS used for ?**

There are three main uses for the Mirena IUS

1. It is used as a reversible contraceptive. It is effective for 5 years (longer if inserted after age 45yrs). It can be used as a long term contraception and is very effective - over 99% effective at preventing pregnancy
2. It can be used as an effective treatment for heavy or painful periods and can reduce menstrual bleeding by up to 90%. You can still have a Mirena IUS for this reason even if you don’t need contraception.
3. It can be used along with oestrogen as part of hormone replacement therapy for perimenopausal and menopausal women

**What are the advantages of the Mirena IUS ?**

* You don’t have to remember to use it
* Periods usually become much lighter and may stop completely
* Periods are usually less painful and can benefit women with endometriosis
* IUS contains only a small amount of hormone, its main effect is local so very little is absorbed into the bloodstream making hormonal side effects like acne, mood disturbance, headaches, breast tenderness less likely
* It can be used if breastfeeding
* Fertility returns to normal once it is removed

**What are the disadvantages ?**

* Your periods may change in a way that isn’t acceptable to you. Some women experience erratic bleeding especially initially (irregular/prolonged or frequent bleeding). For some this bleeding may continue for a number of months (3-6 months) before improving
* The procedure to fit a Mirena IUS involves an internal examination and can be briefly uncomfortable. Many women describe the sensation as “pinching” or “cramping” discomfort. Occasionally the procedure may cause light headedness though this will usually pass.
* A Mirena IUS does not protect you from sexually transmitted infections

**Are there any risks ?**

* There is a small chance of developing a pelvic infection in the first few weeks after a coil fitting.

Swabs may be taken at the time of fitting (or prior to fitting). Please make the doctor aware if you have had a change of sexual partner in the last 3 months/have any symptoms of infection or think you could be at risk of sexually transmitted infection

* The Mirena IUS can come out (be expelled) and the risk of expulsion is around 1 in 20, most commonly within 3 months of insertion. Learning to check your threads can reassure you the coil is in place
* There is a very small risk that during the fitting procedure the Mirena IUS could perforate the wall of the uterus (womb). The risk is up to 2 per 1000 insertions but the risk is higher in women who are breastfeeding or have recently given birth. Overall the risk is low especially when the fitting is done by an experienced clinician
* You are unlikely to become pregnant whilst using an IUS but if you do there is a small chance of ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy in the tube rather than the uterus). However you are still less likely to have an ectopic pregnancy whilst using an IUS than when not using contraception

**When will a Mirena IUS start to work ?**

An IUS can be put in at any time during your cycle (including during your period) if you are certain you are not pregnant

We advise extra precautions for 7 days before the IUS is effective

**Can I have a Mirena IUS if I have recently had a baby ?**

Yes. You can have a Mirena IUS fitted from 4 weeks after delivery but it is probably best to wait for 12 weeks

**Can I have a Mirena IUS if I have never had a baby ?**

Yes. Most women can have a Mirena IUS including those who have never been pregnant and young people

**Are there women who can’t use the Mirena IUS ?**

There are very few women who cannot use the Mirena IUS but please mention to your doctor if you think

* You might be pregnant
* You may have a sexually transmitted or pelvic infection
* You have breast cancer or have had it in the past
* You have had any problems with your uterus or cervix (for example procedures to your cervix such as those following abnormal smears)
* You have unexplained bleeding from your vagina (for example between periods or after sex)
* You have arterial disease or a history of heart disease/stroke

You may still be able to have a Mirena IUS but please discuss this first with your doctor

Please be aware that for some women there may be difficulty in fitting the Mirena IUS at the time of insertion and the doctor will explain why this might be and other options available to you.

**I would like to have a Mirena IUS, what do I do now ?**

Firstly make sure that you are on the waiting list to have a coil fitted.

Waiting times may vary according to demand. Not all GP surgeries offer this service and if you are not able to wait until an appointment is offered please ask our admin team about alternative local providers of sexual health services.

You will be contacted when an appointment for a coil fitting is available. This is a half hour appointment with a doctor and a nurse. You will also be given some further pre-fitting information which includes what to do if you are already using other contraception.

On the day of the appointment please bring along a urine sample (unless you are not needing the coil for contraception) and make sure you have not had any unprotected intercourse in the three weeks before the fitting appointment.

**What to expect at the fitting appointment**

We understand that having a coil fitted can for some be an anxious experience and the doctor and nurse present at your appointment will do their best to make you comfortable.

After counselling you about the procedure and answering any questions you might have you will be asked to sign a consent form.

Once you are comfortable on the examination couch the doctor will perform an internal examination to check the position of the cervix and uterus (womb).

A speculum device (as is used for smear examinations) will be inserted to allow the doctor to see the neck of the cervix clearly.

There may be a pinching or cramping discomfort which is usually brief whilst the Mirena IUS is inserted .

If you feel light-headed at all during the procedure please make the doctor or nurse aware.

Following the procedure you will be given some information including a card with the expiry date for your Mirena IUS. Please keep this safe as you will not receive a reminder when it is due to be removed.

You may feel for the first 24hours as if you are getting a period and if you are safe to take anti-inflammatory medication some ibuprofen may help. You may also experience some spotting following the procedure.

About 6 weeks following the procedure, please book a routine appointment with the doctor who fitted your IUS. This can be by telephone if you are able to check the threads yourself.

You do not need any other routine follow up but please contact the surgery if you have any questions or are experiencing any unexpected problems.

Useful further information : [www.contraceptivechoices.org](http://www.contraceptivechoices.org)