

# What to expect after having a contraceptive coil fitted

## Information for patients

This sheet answers common questions about what to expect after having a contraceptive coil fitted. If you would like further information, or have any particular worries, please do not hesitate to ask your nurse or doctor.

### What to expect after your coil fitting

You will likely experience some cramping pains immediately after the fitting, which can continue for a few days. Taking regular painkillers such as ibuprofen and paracetamol helps to relieve the pain.

You may also experience some light vaginal bleeding after the fitting.

**If you have had a copper coil (IUD) fitted**, this won't change the timing of your periods, however they may become slightly heavier, longer and/or more painful. This may improve after the first few months.

The contraceptive pill, patch or ring can often make periods lighter, so if you have switched from one of these methods to the copper coil you are likely to experience heavier bleeding than you are used to.

**If you have had a hormonal coil (IUS) fitted**, it is common to experience irregular and unpredictable bleeding after the fitting, which can take a few weeks or months to settle. In most people this settles within three months, but occasionally it can continue for up to six months. After this, your periods are usually lighter than normal and can vary from monthly to every few months, or your periods may also stop altogether (which is also normal).

### How to check your coil threads?

It is recommended that you check your threads before you rely on your coil for contraception, to ensure that the coil is in the correct place. After this, it is a good idea to check your threads after each period (or once a month if you have infrequent or no periods).

To check your threads, insert one or two fingers into the vagina (you may need to lie down or squat to do this). At the top of your vagina, you should feel your cervix (the neck of your womb) which feels firm to touch. You should be able to feel the threads here. If you cannot feel the threads or think you can feel the hard stem of the device, use condoms or avoid sex and return to the clinic as soon as possible so that we can make sure that the coil is in place.

## **When can I rely on my coil for contraception?**

**If you have a copper coil (IUD)**, you can rely on it for contraception immediately.

**If you have a hormonal coil (IUS)**, and it was fitted within the first five days of the start of your period, it is effective immediately. If fitted at other times, you should use condoms or avoid sex for seven days after the fitting. If you have been using alternative contraception before fitting such as pills, you can also continue these for another seven days before stopping.

## **Using a menstrual cup**

If you use a menstrual cup, it is recommended that you avoid using this for the first six weeks after a coil fitting. Care should be taken when removing the cup, ensuring you break the seal before removal, to avoid the risk of the coil being displaced (moving position or falling out).

## **You should seek further help if:**

- The pain does not settle within a week or is getting worse.
- You experience heavy bleeding (more than a period).
- You experience a continuous aching pain in your lower abdomen or an unusual smelling discharge, or you feel hot, shivery, or unwell, particularly within the first three weeks of fitting. This may suggest an infection.
- You get deep pain during sex.
- You cannot feel the threads or think you can feel the stem of the device.

## **Contact us**

If you have any problems or concerns after your coil fitting you should call our clinic on 020 7830 2495. Alternatively, you can contact your GP, local walk-in centre or 111.

## **More information**

For more information about the community gynaecology service at the Royal Free London, please visit our website: [www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/gynaecology/community-gynaecology/](http://www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/gynaecology/community-gynaecology/)

## **Your feedback**

If you have any feedback on this leaflet or for a list of references for it, please email: [rf.communications@nhs.net](mailto:rf.communications@nhs.net)

## **Alternative formats**

This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format, for example Braille, a language other than English or audio, please speak to a member of staff.

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