

Having a Coil fitted at University Health Centre

What is a coil?

The contraceptive coil is a device that sits inside the womb (intra-uterine contraceptive device IUCD). There are two main types- the IUS and IUD. The **IUS** releases a small amount of progesterone hormone and the **IUD (copper coil)** is hormone free. There are several different brands of IUS. Of these brands, we offer fitting of **Levosert** (similar to **Mirena**) and **Kyleena**. All are **over 99% effective** at preventing pregnancy, provided they are in the correct position and there is no risk of pregnancy at the time of insertion.

Please read the following information carefully.

How do I arrange to have a coil fitted?

Please book a telephone appointment with **Dr Nina Talbot, Dr Louise Duthie or Dr Diane McCutcheon**, female GPs who are trained in coil insertion. The doctor will assess whether a coil would be suitable for you and answer any questions you may have. During the Covid-19 pandemic, your coil counselling will take place over the telephone.

Occasionally, the doctor may feel that a vaginal examination or vaginal swabs are needed before fitting your coil (for example if you have any problems with periods, current symptoms of infection or have never had a cervical smear). The purpose of the examination is to ensure that fitting in the practice will be appropriate and safe for you. **We are do not offer local anaesthetic injection** to the cervix (neck of the womb) in our coil clinic and therefore, if difficulties in fitting are anticipated, we will arrange a referral to **Chalmers Sexual Health Centre** instead of booking your fitting at the surgery. **You can also self refer to Chalmers by calling 0131 536 1070.**

There is an excellent video explaining how a coil is inserted on the Chalmers website and we strongly recommend that you view this:

<https://www.lothiansexualhealth.scot/contraception/iud-ius/>

After coil counselling, the doctor will then book your coil fitting appointment for you, at a mutually convenient time. If there are no appointments available you will be added to a waiting list for a coil insertion and you will be telephoned when an appointment becomes available. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the waiting time may be several months.

The coil clinic appointments last about 20 minutes. Fitting usually only takes a few minutes, but we allow time for pre fitting checks, an examination and recovery, hence the longer appointment. In addition to the female doctor, a nurse will also be present. **Please ensure you are in good time and ideally have taken 400mg Ibuprofen (with a light meal), before your appointment.** Due to the Covid-19 pandemic we ask that you attend your appointment alone but may wish to inform a friend or partner

of your appointment time so that they can meet you outside and accompany you home after fitting.

Please do not worry if you have your period at the time of your appointment. In fact this can sometimes make the fitting easier, so it is not a problem at all.

Please arrive on time, wearing a face covering and having washed your hands. If you are unable to make your appointment, or change your mind about wanting a coil fitted, please call the surgery ideally giving at least **one week's notice**. Failure to attend is unfair to other patients and we will not offer another appointment if this occurs. If you are unwell with symptoms of Covid-19, please call the surgery to cancel your appointment.

Points to note before having a coil fitted

1. **The most important thing to remember is that there is no risk of pregnancy at the time of insertion.** It is helpful if you have a note of the first day of your **last menstrual period (LMP)** as we will ask you this when you come for your coil fitting.
 - You must be using an effective method of contraception and have not had any problems (eg burst condom, missed pills, IUD overdue for change).
 - You must not have had sex without contraception (or used the withdrawal method) since your last period. **It is not safe to insert a coil if there is any chance, however small, of being pregnant.**
2. You must ensure you are not at risk of **sexually transmitted infection** (eg not have a new partner) OR have taken a recent test for chlamydia or gonorrhoea. Fitting a coil can be harmful in the presence of these infections, which can often be symptomless.
3. No method is 100% effective but the **failure rate is less than 1 in 100 chance of pregnancy.**
4. There is **1 in 1000 risk of perforation of the womb** at the time of insertion. The risk is higher if you have given birth in the last 36 weeks or are breast feeding. Perforation is the most serious complication of coil fitting. It can present with severe pain or heavy bleeding, and the inability to feel the coil threads. Should this occur, it requires a hospital assessment, and if the coil has moved in to the abdominal cavity (through the top of the womb), then surgical removal may be needed.
5. There is a risk of **infection (1 in 100)** in the first few weeks following insertion. This may present with a yellow discharge or fever and can be treated with antibiotics, usually without removal of the coil.

6. After fitting, the doctor should be able to see if your coil is correctly positioned, as the threads of the coils will be visible and palpable. **You should feel for your threads every month** (by inserting two fingers in to the vagina) as there is a **1 in 20 chance of the coil falling out**. If you are ever unable to feel for your threads you should phone the practice and ask to speak to a coil fitting doctor for advice. In this instance, do not rely on the coil for contraception until the coil is confirmed to be in the correct place.
7. **The coil will not protect against sexually transmitted infections** and condoms are needed in addition to the coil if you are with a new partner.
8. If you are eligible for cervical screening (a smear test), please try and ensure this is up to date **before** your coil fitting. This is because smears taken in the weeks after coil fitting can be reported as “inadequate” and may need repeated. Please speak to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions about whether you are due to have a smear test.

Side effects

All coils will cause period like **crampy abdominal pain** for several days after fitting. This is normal and simple painkillers (paracetamol and ibuprofen) should help. Pain that worsens despite these painkillers is an indication that you should speak to a doctor, due to the risk of infection or perforation of the womb.

The **Copper IUD** may make your periods **slightly heavier, longer or more painful**. This is compared to your usual menstrual cycle when you are not using contraception. Your periods should remain regular with no bleeding in between periods.

The **Levosert IUS** will make your periods **much lighter but cause erratic bleeding and spotting in the first few months of use**. This can be frequent over the first few months, but in the majority of patients menstrual bleeding is reduced by 90% by 6-12 months. Many patients become virtually amenorrhoeic (have no bleeding) and this can make the Levosert a popular choice.

As the IUS contains progesterone hormone, **hormonal side effects are possible**. In our experience, these are infrequent and mild, as the hormone is only released in a small quantity, locally in the pelvic area. If you have had hormonal side effects from taking the oral contraceptive pill, it is much less likely that these will occur with an IUS.

The **Kyleena IUS** releases less than half the amount of progesterone hormone compared to the Levosert. It is marginally smaller in size. Bleeding and spotting may occur more frequently with Kyleena.

All patients attending the coil clinic will be given aftercare advice and can request to speak to a coil fitting doctor if they experience any problems in the days or weeks after fitting. If you are happy with your coil and can feel your own threads, a follow up appointment is not necessary. We will not book these routinely due to Covid-19.

Mooncups

Some patients use a mooncup during periods and it is important to be aware that this is a cervical suction device. It is still possible to have a coil, but the theoretical risk of the coil coming out (expulsion) may be increased. It is therefore sensible practice if you do chose to continue using a mooncup, to always check for your coil threads after removing the cup.

Links

IUD information leaflet: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/contraception/iud-coil/>

IUS Information leaflet: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/contraception/ius-intrauterine-system/>

Chalmers Sexual Health Centre:
<https://www.lothiansexualhealth.scot/contraception/iud-ius/>