



Contraceptive Coil with Levonorgestrel – ICGP Patient Information Leaflet

How does the coil work?

The coil releases a small amount of progesterone which thickens the cervical mucus making it difficult for the sperm to get in. It also thins the lining of the womb. The device can last between three and eight years depending on the device. It can sometimes be used as part of HRT. If the coil is inserted after 45 years it can provide effective contraception until post-menopause

How effective is the coil to prevent a pregnancy?

The coil is a very effective method of contraception. After one year, only about one per 500 women using the coil will become pregnant

How is the coil fitted?

The coil is fitted by a trained doctor or nurse; there may also be an assistant present. Fitting usually takes five to 10 minutes, using a speculum in a similar way to how cervical smears are taken. If you are due a smear this can be done at the same time. A sample may be taken to check for sexually transmitted infection. You may feel some period cramp-type discomfort. Local anaesthetic can be given if needed. You may be advised to take a painkiller such as ibuprofen before your procedure if it is suitable for you.

What are the side effects that can happen when a coil is inserted?

Changes in vaginal bleeding

Periods usually become lighter but in the first three to six months women may have irregular bleeding. After this, periods usually become light or stop completely. Rarely a woman may continue to have heavy bleeding.

Failure to insert the coil

Sometimes it is not possible to insert the device and you may have to return another day to attempt insertion again or you may consider another method of contraception.

The coil may fall out

The coil can fall out and so it is important to check the strings yourself or attend the doctor to see that the coil is still in place at intervals.

The coil can perforate the womb

Perforation is rare and affects less than two per 1,000 fittings. The risk is six times higher in women who have recently given birth and in breastfeeding women.

Risk a pregnancy outside the womb

The risk of pregnancy is extremely low with use of the coil, but if the method fails then there is a higher risk that the pregnancy will be ectopic (in the fallopian tube).

Infection

There is a slight risk of pelvic infection in first few weeks after coil insertion. Your risk returns to normal four weeks after a coil insertion.

Hormonal side effects

These may occur but usually settle with time. They include acne, breast tenderness, headache.

Pain in the pelvis (lower tummy)

You may feel some period cramp type discomfort.

Faint (vasovagal episode)

Occasionally your blood pressure and heart rate can drop during or after a coil fitting. This usually resolves quickly and can be treated.

Before attending for your coil to be fitted

Speak to your GP to ensure that you are suitable for a coil to be inserted.

Make an appointment for a coil fitting. It is important that you tell the secretary you are having a contraceptive coil fitted. This is so they can allocate sufficient time for the appointment.

Collect your coil from your pharmacy and bring it to the appointment. The inner packing keeps the insertion device sterile so it is important that this is not opened prior to your appointment. You will need to provide a urine sample on arrival so that a pregnancy test can be done before the procedure commences.

Consider taking a painkiller before attending.

To ensure you are not pregnant **one** of the following should apply on the day of your appointment:

- You are currently using a reliable method of contraception for example coil, implant or pill
- You are within the first five days of your period
- You are less than five days after a miscarriage or an abortion
- You have not been sexually active in the last 21 days and have a negative pregnancy test

If you have any questions, they can be addressed on the day. If you require a callback in advance of your appointment, please contact the surgery to arrange this.

When will my coil start working?

You may require additional contraceptive precautions for one week after your implant insertion. Your doctor will discuss this with you on the day of your appointment.