

Patient advice sheet

Using a Hormone Coil (Mirena/Levosert)**What are Mirena and Levosert coils?**

The Mirena and Levosert coils are small plastic T-shaped devices which sit inside the womb (uterus) and release a type of progesterone hormone called Levonorgestrel. You may also see these referred to as intrauterine systems (IUS).

Note- intrauterine devices (IUDs) also provide contraception but do so by releasing copper

What are they used for?

You may be offered a hormone coil for different reasons including:

Contraception

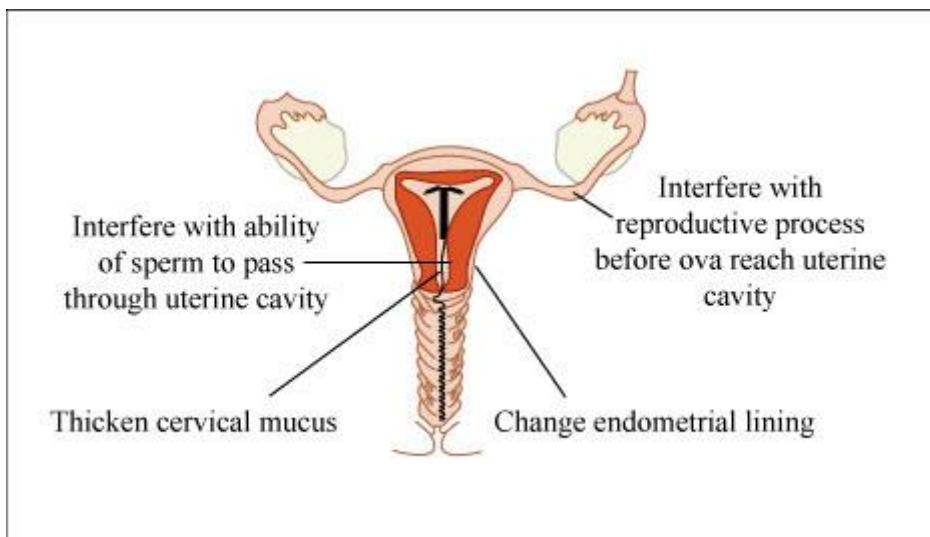
Mirena and Levosert Coils are 99% effective as contraceptive devices for five (Mirena) and six (Levosert) years respectively. Fertility returns to normal almost immediately following removal. They work by thickening the fluid produced by your cervix (cervical mucus) so that it is difficult for sperm to get through to the egg, and by keeping the lining of your womb thin so it prevents the pregnancy implanting.

For Treatment of Heavy Periods

The hormone in the coils makes the lining of your womb thinner so there is less bleeding every month. It can reduce bleeding by up to 90%, this can take between 3-6 months.

As a Form of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) to treat symptoms of Menopause

The Mirena releases the progesterone hormone which protects against abnormal thickening of the womb lining. You may be advised to use a Mirena coil in combination with oestrogen-only HRT. (The Levosert coil has NOT been approved for this particular use)

**How is it Inserted?**

The Mirena/Levosert coil is usually fitted in the outpatient department or with your GP (without local anaesthesia). The process of insertion is generally considered uncomfortable but not too painful. If, however, you find it painful or are having another procedure done it can be fitted under a general anaesthetic.

An instrument called a speculum is inserted into your vagina, similar to having a smear test. A small instrument is then gently inserted to measure the length of your womb. The coil is then fitted using a special insertion tube passed through the cervix into your womb. The small threads attached to the bottom of the coils are then trimmed.

Post-insertion Advice

You may experience crampy, period-like pain following the fitting of the coil, you can take simple pain relief (paracetamol/ibuprofen) for this. You can also use a hot water bottle on your tummy.

You can still use tampons or menstrual cups if you have a hormone coil fitted. You can return to normal activities including exercise when you feel able.

Hormone coils take up to **7 days to work effectively as contraception**, so if you have sex in the first 7 days you will need to use additional contraception such as condoms. To reduce risk of infection it is advisable to avoid sex or tampons in the first few days following insertion.

Please note that Mirena/Levosert coils do not protect you against sexually transmitted infections. Hence additional barrier protection such as condoms may still be advisable.

How Long does it Last?

If you are using a hormone coil for contraception you should have it replaced after 5 (Mirena coil) or 6 years (Levosert). Your Mirena coil should be removed/replaced after 5 years if being used to provide protection to the womb lining as part of your HRT.

Checking your Coil Threads

You can check that your Hormone Coil is in the correct place by feeling for the threads inside your vagina. It is advisable to check for your threads 6 weeks following insertion and then monthly. We do not recommend you check for these straight after insertion. If you are happy that you can feel the threads, no follow up is needed.

Technique for checking your threads:

- Wash your hands
- Either sit or squat
- Insert your index finger into your vagina until you touch the cervix (which should feel like the tip of your nose)
- If you can feel the threads then your coil is in place
- If the coil threads feel longer or shorter than the previous time you checked, or you cannot feel them at all, then the threads may be curled up inside the neck of the womb, fallen out or rarely your coil may have moved

If you are unable to feel the threads contact your GP or CV Health on 01494-412525 who can arrange an appointment to check for the threads to make sure the coil is in the correct place. Until you have been seen consider using an alternative method of birth control (eg.condoms)

Sometimes if your GP is unable to see the threads you may be offered an ultrasound scan to check for the position of the coil and to make sure it hasn't fallen out.

Occasionally women report that their partner can feel the threads during sex. If this happens you can contact your GP and ask for the threads to be trimmed.

How is it Removed?

Your Hormone Coil can usually be easily removed by your GP or nurse by grasping the threads and pulling it out.

What are the Common Side Effects?

Most of the hormone in the coil remains in the womb, however a small amount will be released into the rest of the body and this may cause side effects for some people. These can include:

- Irregular bleeding for the first 3-6 months, this includes spotting and prolonged lighter periods. After this time periods may stop completely.
- Breast tenderness
- Changes to your skin
- Changes in mood
- Weight gain or weight loss

Risks of using a Hormone Coil

- There is a small chance of developing an infection after a hormone coil is fitted
- Rarely the coil can make a small hole in the womb (perforation) and you may need surgery to remove it
- A coil can sometimes fall out – this is more common in the first few weeks following insertion
- If you were to become pregnant with a hormone coil there is a very small risk of an ectopic pregnancy

If you have severe pain or feel unwell following insertion of your coil you should seek medical advice from your GP, NHS 111 or in an emergency A+E.

If you have any concerns please talk to your GP who will help you consider the risks and benefits of using a Hormone Coil and read the product information leaflet on: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/medicine/2796>

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible, but please note that it is subject to change. Please therefore always check specific advice on any concerns you may have with your doctor.

How can you help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection prevention & control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection prevention & control procedures in place. Wearing a mask and keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. Please follow our infection prevention and control guidelines when visiting our healthcare sites. Further information is available on our website.

Patient Advice Sheet

If you would like a copy of this information on audiotape, in large print or translated, please call the Patient Advice Liaison Service on 01296 831120 or email bht.pals@nhs.net

Division of Women, Children & Sexual Health Services

Approvals:

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Clinical Guidelines Subgroup: not required

Patient Evaluation forms: V1 completed

Equality Impact Assessment: Apr 2010, V1 Mar 2022

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