

Comparing IUDs

Characteristic	Copper-Bearing IUD	Levonorgestrel IUD
Effectiveness	Nearly equal. Both are among the most effective methods.	
Length of use	Approved for 10 years.	Approved for 5 years.
Bleeding patterns	Longer and heavier monthly bleeding, irregular bleeding, and more cramping or pain during monthly bleeding.	More irregular bleeding and spotting in the first few months. After one year no monthly bleeding is more common. Causes less bleeding than copper-bearing IUDs over time.
Anemia	May contribute to iron-deficiency anemia if a woman already has low iron blood stores before insertion.	May help prevent iron-deficiency anemia.
Main reasons for discontinuation	Increased bleeding and pain.	No monthly bleeding and hormonal side effects.
Noncontraceptive benefits	May help protect against endometrial cancer.	Effective treatment for long and heavy monthly bleeding (alternative to hysterectomy). May also help treat painful monthly bleeding. Can be used as the progestin in hormone replacement therapy.
Postpartum use	Can be inserted up to 48 hours postpartum.	Can be inserted after 4 weeks postpartum.
Use as emergency contraception	Can be used within 5 days after unprotected sex.	Not recommended.
Insertion	Requires specific training but easier to insert than levonorgestrel IUD.	Requires specific training and a unique, more difficult insertion technique. Women may experience faintness, pain, and nausea or vomiting at insertion more than with the copper-bearing IUD.
Cost	Less expensive.	More expensive.