



Intra-Uterine Devices

What is an Intra-Uterine Device?

Intra-uterine devices (IUD) are contraceptive devices inserted into the uterus that release either hormones or copper to stop you from getting pregnant.

Dr Tania Morgan is a gynaecologist with extensive experience in the placement of IUDs using ultrasound guidance to ensure it is positioned correctly. We also regularly retrieve IUDs for women when it is time for their removal.

Intra-uterine device location

Ultrasound examination is the best way to locate an intra-uterine contraceptive device, Mirena or Kyleena intra-uterine system (IUS). If you can feel the string, then it is probably in the right position but the only way to be absolutely sure is by ultrasound examination.

When would I need an ultrasound examination?

- Your doctor may request that the device be put in or removed under ultrasound guidance.
- To check the location of the IUD, Mirena or Kyleena after the procedure.
- You cannot feel the string.
- It was a difficult insertion.

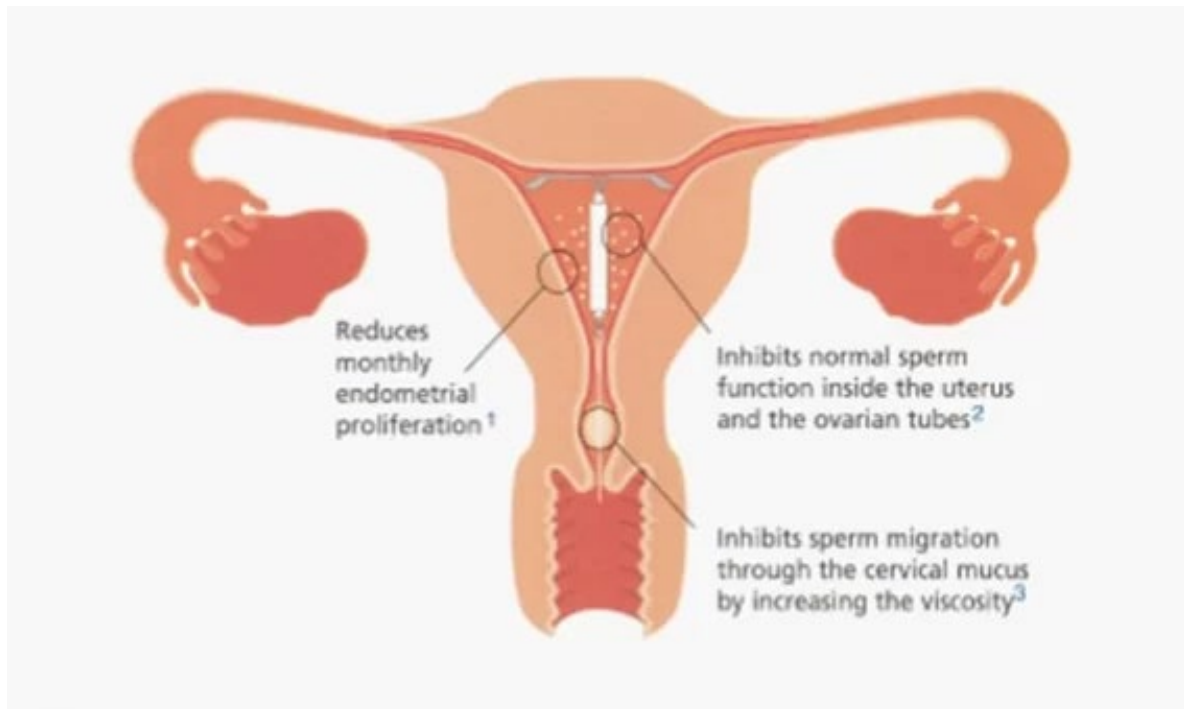
- There were multiple fibroids which could interfere with the insertion.
- There is any suspicion of pregnancy.
- You are not experiencing the expected effect from the IUD.

What type of examination is needed?

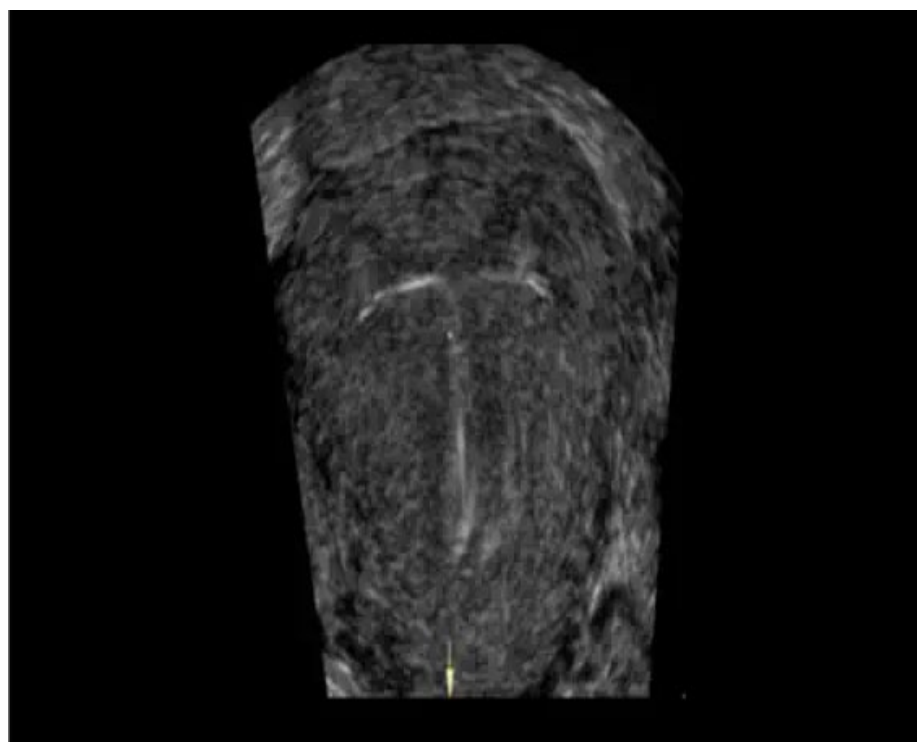
The sonographer will usually use the transvaginal approach to assess the IUD because we get much better views and can produce a 3D image to show the location of the IUD. Occasionally the IUD is a long way from the vagina and uterus, so we need the trans-abdominal approach to give us a more global view of the pelvis.

Three-dimensional ultrasound is complementary to two-dimensional ultrasound and can be valuable in showing the position of the device and arms, especially when it has moved in the uterus. We use both 2D and 3D ultrasound to be sure of the device position.

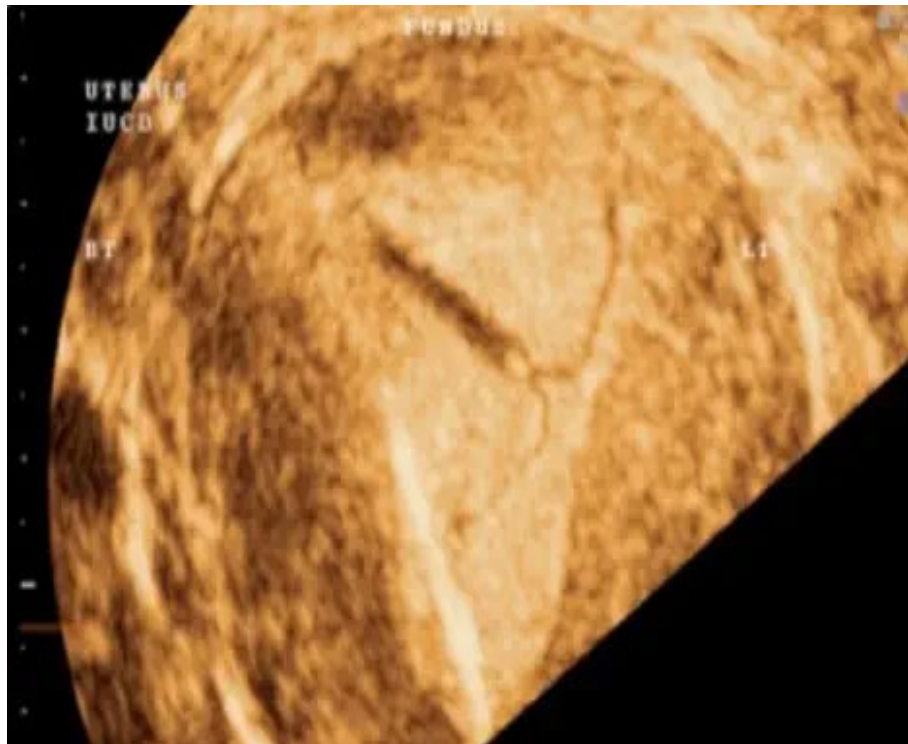
This diagram of a Mirena IUS shows all the different ways that it works



A Mirena IUS correctly positioned in the uterus on 3d ultrasound



This Mirena IUS is rotated in the top of the uterus causing pain and bleeding. The string is seen going down the side of the cavity. It was easily removed.



How is a Mirena IUS or copper IUD usually removed?

When the time comes to remove an IUD, it is usually done by inserting a speculum into the vagina. The doctor then grasps the strings of the Mirena or IUD as they come through the cervix and then by applying gentle traction, the device is easily retrieved.

What if the strings are not seen when it is time to remove the device?

It may be that the strings have migrated into the uterine cavity, the device has moved, or the strings have been cut too short to be seen in the vagina.

In a doctor's office setting (i.e., not in a scan room), various instruments have been used to help remove an IUD. As, these devices are used blindly without ultrasound guidance, removal may not be successful. In the past, many women have needed to have a general anaesthetic to remove the IUD.

How is ultrasound helpful?

Firstly, 2D and 3D ultrasound can check that the IUD is in the uterus. If it is, it will continue to work effectively (Mirena and Kyleena IUD are effective for 5 years). Many women will leave the IUD in place until they are ready for it to be removed or replaced.

If the IUD is to be removed, ultrasound can be used to see where the strings are. Our doctor can then use ultrasound to guide the instruments we use to the strings, or even to the IUD itself.

If another device is then required to be placed into the uterine cavity, we can check that it is in the right position, so you can go home feeling confident that your IUD has been perfectly placed.

Our doctor is successful in removing more than 75% IUD in cases where the IUD could not be removed in the referring doctor's rooms. This has saved many of our patients undergoing a general anaesthetic.

What can I expect on the day of an IUD removal procedure?

When you come for your appointment, we will perform an internal ultrasound scan of the uterus and ovaries. Once the scan has been completed, the doctor inserts a speculum into the vagina – just like when a pap smear is performed.

With ultrasound guidance, an instrument is guided into the uterine cavity to grasp the strings of the IUD. Then it is removed with gentle traction. If this is not successful, your doctor can use different instruments to grasp the IUD itself.

Most women experience minor discomfort; however, some women may feel hot and dizzy for a short period of time. We encourage you to rest for 10 minutes or so before leaving our rooms.

After the device removal, most women will have some bleeding for a day or two, but this will settle with a little time. However, if you are worried, please give us a call and speak to one of our care team.

