

is too soon to be sure that there are no long-term ill effects. Your doctor can tell you if you have a condition which would make it unwise for you to take the Pill. If you are on the Pill, you should have an internal examination from a doctor at least once a year. If you have any problem you don't understand or expect, be sure to call the doctor right away.

If you decide you want to have a baby, just stop taking the Pill.

Intrauterine Devices IUDs

The intrauterine devices (IUDs), are small plastic or metal shapes which the doctor places inside a woman's womb (uterus). They come in several shapes and work very well in preventing pregnancy. IUDs have been tested since 1959 and are very safe. Although not quite 100 per cent effective, they are one of the best methods of birth control.

IUDs Need Little Attention

Once the doctor has placed the IUD inside the womb (a simple, not painful process), it can be left there for years, protecting you from unwanted pregnancy. It requires little attention. During sex, neither the man nor woman can tell it is there. An added advantage of the IUD is that it does not interfere with the sex act. The IUD user should visit the doctor at least once a year for a medical examination. Some women have cramps for a little while after the IUD has been put in by the doctor. Menstrual periods may be heavier, and bleeding or spotting may occur between periods. Discomfort usually stops after a few months. Menstrual periods proceed normally. Tampons may be used. If you wish to douche you can, but it is not necessary. Use of the IUD in no way changes your ability to have children. When you want to get pregnant, you go to the doctor and he quickly and simply removes the IUD.

Diaphragm with Jelly or Cream

A diaphragm is a thin sheet of soft rubber stretched over a metal ring that bends easily. It is placed in the birth canal (vagina) and covers the entrance to the womb (cervix). It does not interfere with sex relations and it will not hurt either sex partner. This was considered the most effective method of birth control by doctors until the Pill and IUD became available. It is very effective when used correctly. As with the Pill and IUD, you can put it in at a time other than when you are having sex. The diaphragm must fit between two places in the birth canal, and different women need different sizes. A doctor must first examine you to find out what type and shape diaphragm you need.

The doctor will also teach you how to put in the diaphragm (which can be bought, according to size, in the drugstore). Because women's bodies change, you should return to the doctor once a year to see if your diaphragm is still exactly the right size.