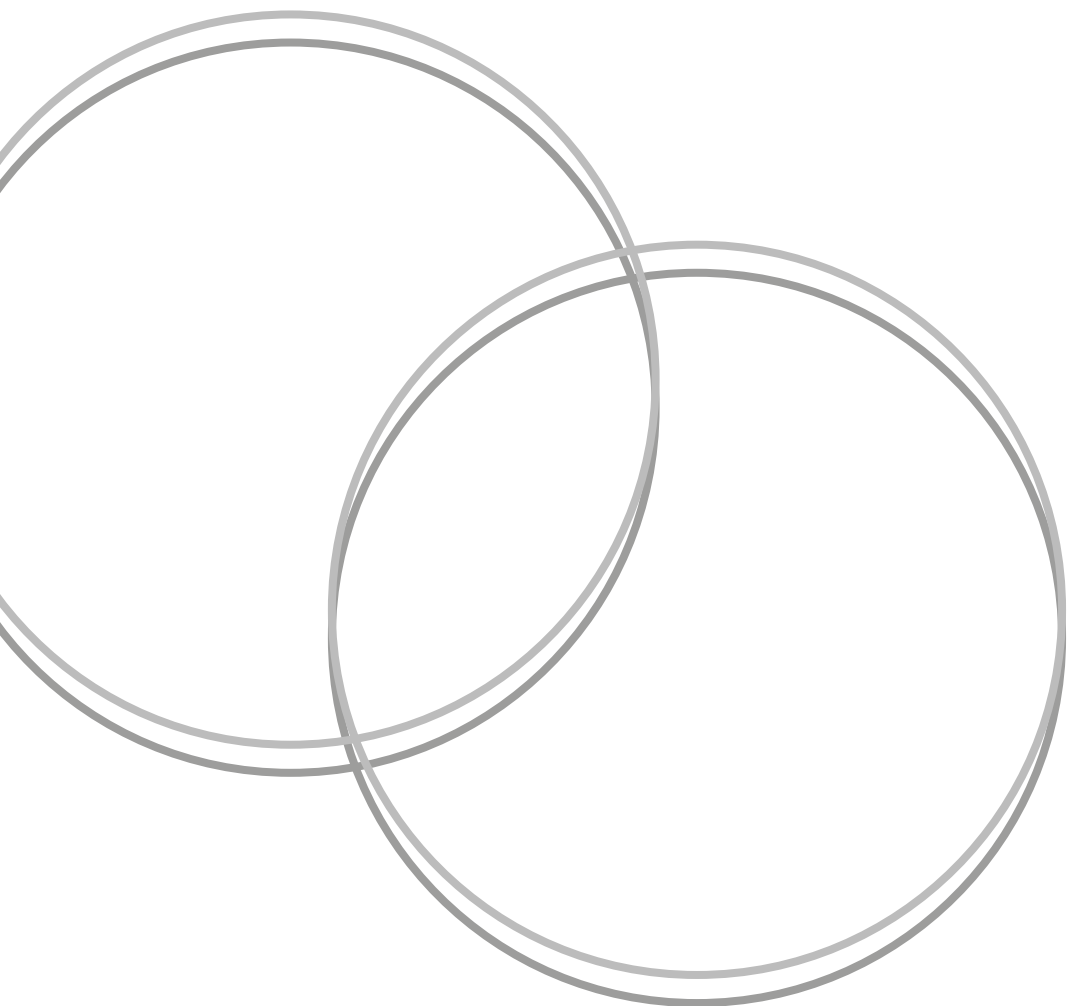


# Having a Contraceptive Coil Fitted at the Time of Caesarean Section

Information leaflet



## Who is this leaflet for?

This information is for anyone who wants to know more about having a contraceptive coil inserted at the time of caesarean section.

## Why might having a contraceptive coil inserted at caesarean section be a good idea?

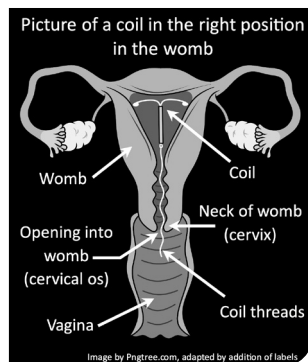
You can get pregnant as soon as 21 days after giving birth. Delaying any future pregnancy by a year or more allows your scar time to heal; and waiting for **two years** is safer for you and a future baby as your body has enough time to rest, repair and replenish ready for the next pregnancy. Intrauterine contraception, often known as a coil, is one of the most effective ways of preventing or delaying pregnancy.

### Having a coil inserted at a caesarean section is:

- Safe, quick and pain free, as you will already have an anaesthetic for the caesarean section.
- Convenient, as you don't have to remember to use it before having sex.
- A very effective type of contraception, less than 1 in 100 women will become pregnant while using it.
- Reversible, as soon as it is removed your ability to get pregnant returns.
- Safe to use if you breastfeed, as it will not affect milk supply.
- Safe to use if you take any other medication, as it is not affected by any other drugs.

## How will the coil be put in at the caesarean section?

The coil will be inserted through the cut in the womb made at the time of the caesarean section. It takes a few minutes and will be done just after the placenta is delivered. Threads attached to the coil are directed towards the neck of the womb and should later drop through the neck of the womb into your vagina.



## What types of coil are available?

Two types of coil are available:

	Hormonal Coil	Copper Coil
<b>What is it?</b>	Small plastic T-shaped device, size of a matchstick, releases a hormone called levonorgestrel.	Small plastic T-shaped device, size of a matchstick, coated in copper. Does <b>not</b> use hormones.
<b>How does it work?</b>	Thickens mucus at the womb entrance, thins the womb lining, stops eggs being released (in some women).	Stops sperm surviving, can stop a fertilised egg implanting in the womb.
<b>How long does it last?</b>	Up to 8 years (depending on brand).	Up to 10 years (depending on brand).
<b>How does it affect periods?</b>	May get lighter, shorter, or less painful. May become irregular or stop.	May get heavier, longer, or more painful. This may improve after a few months.
<b>Any side effects?</b>	May get changes to mood, weight, skin, hair, or sex drive; headaches or breast tenderness. These often get better after a few months. May get small fluid-filled ovarian cysts. These are not dangerous and usually don't need treatment. Small increase in risk of breast cancer.	No side effects
<b>Does it protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?</b>	Does not protect against STIs	Does not protect against STIs
<b>Can I use tampons or a menstrual cup?</b>	Can use tampons or a menstrual cup	Can use tampons or a menstrual cup

## Why might I not be able to have a coil inserted at caesarean section?

You should **not** have a hormonal or copper coil inserted at the caesarean section if:

- Your waters broke for 24 hours or longer before the caesarean section.
- You bleed heavily at the time of the caesarean section.
- You have an infection in your womb or an untreated sexually transmitted infection.
- You have a heart-shaped or unusually shaped womb.
- You had unexplained bleeding prior to pregnancy.
- You have organ transplant complications.

You should not have a **hormonal** coil inserted if:

- You have, or have ever had, breast cancer, serious liver disease, arterial disease, coronary heart disease, a stroke or mini stroke (the symptoms are like a stroke but get better within a day).

## What are the risks of having a coil inserted at caesarean section?

If you have the coil inserted at your caesarean section the following risks are higher than if you have a coil inserted at any other time:

- **'Lost threads'** – it is not possible to feel or see the coil threads in your vagina. This is common and happens to 30 in 100 women who have a coil fitted at caesarean section. (It only happens to 1 in 100 women if the coil is fitted not at the time of caesarean section.) The coil may have fallen out or the threads may be curled up inside your womb. If the threads are curled up the coil will still work, but it will be slightly harder to take out.
- **Long threads** – the threads of the coil hang out of the vagina. This happens to less than 1 in 100 women. After birth the womb contracts back to its pre-pregnancy size, so the coil threads may hang further down and need trimming.
- **Expulsion** – the coil falls out of the womb. This happens to approximately 3 in 100 women, often soon after the coil has been put in. It is more likely to happen if you are in labour at the time of your caesarean section as the neck of the womb is already open. You may not see or feel the coil fall out.
- **Displacement** – the coil is inside the womb but has moved from its original position. This may make the coil less effective at preventing a pregnancy.

## **What are the risks of having a coil, whether, or not, it is inserted at caesarean section?**

- **Infection** – this is uncommon and happens to 1 in 100 women. In the first few weeks after insertion, you may notice lower ‘tummy’ (abdominal) pain, a smelly discharge, pain when passing urine, pain when having sex, or a high temperature. If you think you might have an infection, contact the Maternity Assessment Unit (MAU), your midwife or GP.
- **Perforation** – the coil makes a small hole in the womb. This is rare and happens to less than 1 in 1000 women. You may notice ongoing pain in your lower ‘tummy’ abdomen. If you do, contact the Maternity Assessment Unit (MAU), your midwife or GP. Surgery may be needed to remove the coil.
- **Ectopic pregnancy** – a pregnancy develops outside of the womb. Coils are extremely effective at preventing a pregnancy, but if you do become pregnant the risk of it being an ectopic pregnancy is as high as 1 in 2. You should seek immediate medical help if you miss a period, have a change in your bleeding pattern, develop lower ‘tummy’ (abdominal) pain, or have a positive pregnancy test when the coil is still inside.

## What do I need to do after the coil is inserted?

Before you restart having sex, it is important to check you can feel the coil threads in your vagina. This tells you that the coil is in the right place. You should check the coil threads every few months and especially after a heavy bleed. To check your coil threads, follow these steps:

- Find a space that is warm, comfortable and private, you may find it easier to lie down on your back or to squat on the floor.
- Gently insert two fingers into your vagina and gradually push them upwards (like inserting a tampon) towards the top of your vagina.
- You should be able to feel your cervix (neck of the womb), it sits at the top of the vagina and feels soft like the tip of your nose.
- In the middle of your cervix is an opening that leads to your womb, this opening (called the cervical os) should feel like a dimple in the middle of your cervix.
- You should be able to feel the threads of the coil coming down and out through this opening.
- Over time the coil threads soften and may become harder to feel – if you move your fingertips around the opening of the cervix (that feels like a dimple as explained above), you should still be able to feel the coil threads under your fingers.
- If the coil threads are very long or interfering with sex, you can ask your GP or local sexual health service to trim them.

## **What if I can't feel the threads, they feel longer than usual, or I can feel something hard (the plastic stem of the coil)?**

**Do not rely on the coil for contraception.** It may not be in the right place and may not be working.

### **You should:**

1. Contact your GP or local sexual health service.
2. Use condoms or avoid having sex.
3. Consider taking emergency contraception if you have had sex since you last knew your coil was in the right place.

The doctor or nurse will check if the coil threads are visible by doing a vaginal examination (a bit like a smear test). If the coil threads are not visible an ultrasound scan will be arranged to check if the coil is still inside the womb. You will need to use alternative contraception or avoid having sex until you know the coil is in the right place.



## When and how will the coil be removed?

At the time of your caesarean section, you will be given an information card with the 'use by date' of the coil. The coil will work up to this date, but you can choose to have it removed earlier if you wish.

If you plan to become pregnant you can start preparing **before** the coil is removed:

- Take folic acid for at least 3 months before you start trying for a baby.
- If you have a medical condition, make a pre-pregnancy plan with your GP or hospital team.

If you don't plan to become pregnant, or you wish to have the coil replaced with another coil, you need to avoid having sex in the 7 days before the coil is removed or replaced.

You can book a coil removal or replacement with your GP or local sexual health service (if you want a replacement check your GP can also insert coils). The doctor or nurse will do a vaginal examination (a bit like a smear test), gently pull on the threads and the coil will slide out. It is common to feel cramping as the coil is removed.

## Can I have the coil inserted at another time?

If you prefer, you can have the coil inserted any time from 4 weeks after your baby is born. This can be planned and arranged while you are still pregnant. Contact your local sexual health service (see below) or ask if your GP provides this service.

## Where can I find more information?

If you have questions about the contraceptive coil, or other types of contraception for after your baby is born, please:

- Talk to your doctor or midwife.
- Take a look at the Frequently Asked Questions on the ContraceptionChoices website, and click on the section labelled 'Contraception after having a baby':  
**[www.contraceptionchoices.org/faqs](http://www.contraceptionchoices.org/faqs)**
- If you live in Oxfordshire, contact Oxfordshire Sexual Health Service, and book an appointment to discuss contraception:  
Phone number: 01865 231 231  
Online booking:  
**[www.sexualhealthoxfordshire.nhs.uk/contact/appointments](http://www.sexualhealthoxfordshire.nhs.uk/contact/appointments)**
- If you live outside Oxfordshire you can find your local sexual health service via the NHS services search on the NHS website  
**[www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-health-services/contraception-information-and-advice](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-health-services/contraception-information-and-advice)**

**We would like to thank the Oxfordshire Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership for their contribution in the development of this leaflet.**

## Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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