



Transcript from *Contraception 101: More than Just Pills and Condoms*  
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## **Part 5: IUD**

Eve Espey, MD [*Faculty, OBGYN, University of New Mexico*]: Now I'm gonna talk about the two methods that...that I think we should really be focusing on. The...the top two reversible methods in this country are birth control pills and condoms and they, the birth control pill as I mentioned there are many great things about it. Condoms are really the only contraceptive method that we have that prevents uh, sexually-transmitted infections. But the problem with both...both of those methods is that they're...they're totally user-dependent and you can stop without doing anything. So the methods that I'm gonna talk about that I think we should be uh, that we should be looking at is first-line methods and I brought some samples uh, in case some of you have never seen these—I hope you have—uh, are IUDs and Implanon. Uh, there are two IUDs that are licensed in this country. This is the Mirena IUD. Anybody heard of this? Good. This one's advertised on television. This uh, this one that's green and red is not for human use so you can touch it. Uh, this is the applicator, this big plastic thing, but the actual IUD what stays in the woman's body is just this small T-shaped uh, piece of plastic that has a little reservoir, this green thing, which in...in uh, in the real model is white and it releases a very small amount of progesterone uh, into the uterine cavity every day. So I'm gonna

go ahead and pass those around. And this IUD, this...this is the five-year IUD. And this is uh, a ParaGard IUD. So this is the, this...this has been around since 1989. It's uh, also a small piece of plastic with a little bit of copper wire around it. It lasts for ten years, um, and we'll...we'll pass that around as well. So the...the...the major uh, benefits of the Mirena IUD uh, are that you get five years of contraception uh, for a single act of motivation. It does hurt to put the IUD in, not a ton, a little bit. Uh, it does, but it does hurt. Uh, and I...and I do hasten to tell patients that just because it lasts for five years doesn't mean that you need to use it for five years. Uh, we're...we're, we...we uh, definitely promote women having children uh, as they...as they want to. Uh, this is to plan families. So if a woman wants to use it for a year, great; uh, for three years, great, but it lasts up to five years. And...and it...it does allow uh, family spacing. You have to do something in order to stop using it. It's very easy to remove an IUD, just like getting a pap smear, a speculum is...is...is placed and uh, there's a little string on it. Uh, we just pull the string and pull the IUD out. It's...it's literally a half-a-minute procedure. It's about a five-minute procedure to put it in. Uh, but the fact that you have to do something to...to get it removed is one of its major benefits. It has a...a, an excellent continuation rate. It's about, both...both of these IUDs is about eight uh, an eighty-percent continuation rate at the end of the year, compared with all the methods that I just talked about, which are more like a sixty-five percent continuation rate in a year. And in teens those continuation rates for the hormonal contraceptives are...are even lower. They're about forty percent uh, in teens. So it turns out that IUDs and Implanons actually have the same continuation rate in teens that they do in older adults. So they I think are particularly well suited for younger women. Uh, the progesterone IUD has some specific

benefits and those are that it reduces bleeding because of that uh, hormone that's released directly into the uterus. It reduces bleeding. It reduces cramping and just but, just the...the way we use birth control pills or the patch or the ring to help women—who don't even need contraception, but just need help with heavy periods—we use the...the...the...the hormone IUD in the same way. Uh, it's a benefit for women who need contraception. They not only get the contraception, but they also get those benefits of reduced bleeding and cramping. Uh, in terms of side effects, the biggest side effect with the hormone IUD is that in the first three months af...after it's placed uh, the woman can experience some irregular bleeding and cramping. That usually goes away and there's a profound drop in the amount of bleeding that a woman has with her menstrual period uh, after that first two to three months. Uh, it costs, it has a higher print cost and that's been one of the big problems with IUDs. So it cost anywhere, it's highly variable uh, depending on what pricing you—let's say as a clinic get, for the IUD and then how much of that cost is passed on to the patient for insertion. It can cost anywhere from two hundred dollars to eight hundred dollars, but even at that higher price, it breaks down to about a hundred dollars a year, which is significantly less money than birth control pills. And both IUDs, both the...the uh, copper IUD and the hormone IUD have been shown to be more cost-effective over time than any other method. So uh, so that, I think that's, it's...it's really important to understand what a huge public health impact these...these methods, like IUDs, could have. Now IUDs have a bad rap in this country because there was a bad IUD many years ago uh, that...that sort of tarnished the reputation of all IUDs and we still haven't recovered from some of this bad feeling about IUDs. But modern IUDs are safe. They're effective. They're good for almost everyone, just like pills.

There are very few women who cannot uh, use IUDs safely. The copper IUD is, has uh, is licensed for ten years of use. So it's an even longer term uh, contraceptive than the...than the Mirena uh, IUD. The biggest side effect of that IUD is that it can cause uh, heavier bleeding and uh, and cramping particularly in the first few months of use. Again it breaks down to about fifty dollars a year in terms of the cost. The copper IUD is about a hundred dollars less expensive. So the average cost of a copper I...IUD is about two hundred and fifty to three hundred dollars. The average cost of the hormone IUD is about four hundred and fifty dollars. So over time they're very cost-effective, but up front uh, it can be challenging to get payers to uh, to cover these more expensive methods.