

Get the facts about...

The Diaphragm, Cervical Cap, Contraceptive Sponge and Spermicide

Choosing Birth Control...

There are two ways to enjoy sex without getting pregnant...sex other than vaginal intercourse or vaginal intercourse with birth control. The use of birth control is an individual and private matter. It affects your body, relationships and lifestyle. There is no perfect choice in birth control. Get the facts you need and talk to people you trust. Choose a method that's right for you. Always use latex condoms along with your birth control method to lower your chances of getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including Human Immunodeficiency Virus or HIV—the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

Why choose the diaphragm, cervical cap, sponge or spermicide?

- These methods are a popular alternative to the birth control pill. The diaphragm, cervical cap, and sponge are about 82-94% effective in preventing pregnancy.
- Spermicide is about 79-94% effective in preventing pregnancy; spermicide and male condoms used together are 99% effective.

How do they work?

- These methods put a barrier between the woman's cervix and the sperm that comes from the man's penis during intercourse.
- You will have to put these methods of birth control into your vagina before you have sexual intercourse.
- You need to feel comfortable touching your vagina if you choose these methods.
- Using these methods every time you have sexual intercourse increases their effectiveness.

Where can I get them?

Diaphragm - at the drug store (with a prescription) or at a community health clinic.

Cervical Cap - at a community health clinic.

Contraceptive Sponge and Spermicide - at a drug store without a prescription.

To protect yourself and your partner from STIs and HIV use a male latex condom or female condom.

Diaphragm... What is it?

The diaphragm is a shallow dome-shaped cup made of rubber with a flexible rim. It comes in different sizes. The doctor will measure your vagina to see what size you need.

Cervical Cap... What is it?

The cervical cap is a thimble-shaped latex rubber cup with a firm, round rim. It fits snugly around the cervix. Suction holds it in place. It comes in different sizes. Your doctor will measure your cervix to see what size you need.

How do the diaphragm and cap work?

The diaphragm and cervical cap work by covering the cervix and by holding spermicide close to the cervix to kill sperm.

Both the diaphragm and cap must be put in your vagina before you have sexual intercourse. Put about a teaspoon of spermicidal jelly around the rim and in the centre of the diaphragm. Fill the cervical cap about 1/3 full with spermicide (do not put spermicide around the rim). Your doctor or nurse will teach you how to use it.

You need to add more spermicide if you wait more than two hours between inserting the diaphragm or cap and having vaginal intercourse, or having vaginal intercourse more than once while the diaphragm or cap is in place. Make sure

to use an applicator and do not remove the diaphragm or cap. If you find this too messy, use condoms for repeated intercourse while the diaphragm or cap is in place.

- Leave the diaphragm or cap in for six to eight hours after the last intercourse. This is so the spermicide has time to kill the sperm. It is safe to leave it in for up to 24 hours.
- To remove the diaphragm hook your finger around the rim and pull. To remove the cap, hook your finger over the edge to release the suction.

Caring for the cervical cap and diaphragm

Wash with mild soap and water. Dry carefully and dust it with cornstarch. Check for holes by holding it up to the light or running water into it.

You may need a new cap or diaphragm:

- if you lose or gain 10 to 15 pounds,
- after having a baby, miscarriage or an abortion,
- after any kind of abdominal surgery,
- if it feels uncomfortable,
- after one year of use.

Be sure to see your doctor or nurse for a new fitting.

Contraceptive Sponge... What is it?

- The sponge is a soft, round piece of foam with handles or slots around it. These slots help you put it in and remove it. It fits into the vagina, and one size fits all. The sponge contains three different types of spermicide, called F-5 Gel, which kills sperm.
- The sponge acts as a barrier between the cervix and sperm. The sponge absorbs and traps sperm so the spermicide can kill it.

Contraceptive Sponge...How does it work?

- Carefully read the instructions that come with the package. You may also want to visit your doctor or other health care provider, who can help you learn to use it.
- Put the sponge in before you have sexual intercourse. To put the sponge in you can squat or lie down on your back with your knees lifted up against your chest. Take the sponge from the package, put your finger into one of the slots or handles and push the sponge into place as far back into the vagina as possible. Place it in front of the cervix.
- The sponge must be inserted before vaginal intercourse and is effective for 24 hours. Leave the sponge in for six to eight hours after the last act of sexual intercourse. This is so the spermicide has time to kill the sperm.
- The sponge will probably not fall out. If you feel it coming out push it back up. If it happens to fall out before the six hours are up, put in another one right away.
- To take the sponge out, put your finger into the back of your vagina and gently pull on one of the slots or handles. Bearing down or pushing will help you take out the sponge.
- Do not use the sponge when you have your period.

Spermicide...How does it work?

Spermicide contains a chemical called nonoxynol-9. Nonoxynol-9 kills sperm. There are many different types of spermicide.

Foam comes in a container that you shake before use. It looks like hair mousse. Put the foam into an applicator and insert it into your vagina close to your cervix just before vaginal intercourse. You will need to put in more foam each time you have vaginal intercourse.

Jelly comes in a squeezable tube. Use it with the diaphragm and cervical cap.

Vaginal Contraceptive Film (VCF) is a very thin plastic-like square that contains spermicide. Fold one and insert it by hand into your vagina. It melts inside the vagina. Put one in about 15 minutes before vaginal intercourse. Put another one in for repeated intercourse.

Suppositories are small oval pellets. Using your fingers, put one in your vagina about 15 minutes before vaginal intercourse. Put another one in for repeated intercourse.

Vaginal Contraceptive Gel is a white liquid that you put into your vagina with an applicator. It looks like a tampon. First, shake the applicator so that all the spermicide goes into the tube. Put the applicator inside the vagina and squeeze the square end so that the liquid inside the applicator squirts out and sticks to the cervix. It works right away and you can put it into your vagina up to 24 hours before a single act of sexual intercourse. Put more in for repeated sexual intercourse.

To increase effectiveness, use condoms with spermicides. The vagina naturally gets rid of spermicides. Do not have a tub bath or douche for six to eight hours after the last sexual intercourse. This is so the spermicide has time to kill sperm. It's okay to shower. See package for specific instructions for use.

Advantages of the diaphragm, cervical cap, contraceptive sponge and spermicide

- You only have to use them when you need them.
- You and your partner don't usually feel them.
- They don't cause any changes in your body.
- They provide some protection from some STIs.
- You don't have to interrupt foreplay to put in the diaphragm, cervical cap or sponge.
- The **sponge** and **spermicide** are easy to get - you don't need a prescription from a doctor.
- You don't need to add more spermicide for repeated sexual intercourse when you use the **sponge**.
- Some **spermicides** have a lower dose of nonoxynol-9 than other spermicides. This may be less irritating for you or your partner.

Disadvantages of the diaphragm, cervical cap, contraceptive sponge and spermicide

- Some women find them hard to put in or take out. Practice putting them in a few times before you have vaginal intercourse. This may help you feel more comfortable using them.
- You must remember to have them with you every time you have vaginal intercourse
- The **sponge** and **spermicide** can cost a lot. Talk to your public health nurse or community health clinic if cost is a problem.
- **Spermicide** may irritate you or your partner. If there is irritation, try using another brand of spermicide or stop use.
- Some people find **foam** messy.
- Most **spermicides** have an unpleasant taste, but they will not hurt you or make you feel ill if you swallow them.
- There is a small risk that the use of a **diaphragm, cervical cap** or **sponge** may result in Toxic Shock Syndrome or a urinary tract infection. Check with your health care provider about whether these methods are best for you.
- **Spermicide** may not protect against HIV. Be sure to use condoms.
- The doctor must fit the **diaphragm** and **cervical cap**. You have to clean them after each use, and you must add spermicide with repeated intercourse.
- The **sponge** is less effective for women who have had more than one baby. The vagina stretches after birth so the sponge may move out of place.

Where can I get more information on the diaphragm, cervical cap, sponge and spermicide?

You can get more information from your public health nurse, community health clinic, doctor, or pharmacist. You can also call the **Facts of Life Line** to talk about birth control, sexuality, STIs, relationships, and pregnancy options. **Call 947-9222 in Winnipeg or toll-free in Manitoba at 1-800-432-1957.**

You can also check out this website: www.serc.mb.ca.