
Get the facts about...

The Diaphragm, Cervical Barriers, 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 male latex or female 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 barriers, 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. They are less effective for women who have given birth before.
- Spermicide is about 71-82% 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 barriers - three different brand names are available (the FemCap, Lea's Shield, and the Oves Contraceptive Cap). No prescriptions are necessary. To order, go to <http://www.ladybaby.com>.

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 Barriers... What are they?

The FemCap, Lea's Shield, and Oves Contraceptive Cap are made of silicone and are designed to cover or conform to the shape of the cervix.

How do the diaphragm and cervical barriers work?

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

Both the diaphragm and cervical barriers 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. The cervical barriers must also be used with spermicide. 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 cervical barrier and having vaginal intercourse, or having vaginal intercourse more than once while they are in place. Make sure to use an applicator and do not remove the diaphragm or cervical barrier.

If you find this too messy, use condoms for repeated intercourse while these methods are in place. You do not need more spermicide for the Oves Cap.

- Leave the diaphragm or barrier 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. The FemCap and Lea's Shield can be kept in place for 48 hours. The Oves Cap can be left in place for 72 hours.
- To remove the diaphragm hook your finger around the rim and pull. The cervical barriers have loops to help you remove them.

Caring for the diaphragm and cervical barriers

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. The Oves Cap is disposable (up to 3 acts of consecutive intercourse per cap).

You may need a new 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 a loop for ease of removal.. 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 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 barriers.

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 barriers, 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 barriers or sponge**.
- The **sponge, spermicide and cervical barriers** 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 barriers, 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 barriers 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.
- A health care provider must fit the **diaphragm**. You have to clean it 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 these websites:

<http://www.serc.mb.ca>; <http://ladytobaby.com>; <http://www.femcap.com>; <http://www.leasshield.com>.