

What You Should Know About ...

See Glossary section for definitions of underlined words.

Diaphragms

What is a diaphragm?

- The diaphragm is a shallow dome-shaped soft rubber cup. It has a flexible rim.
- Your health care provider will measure your vagina to see what size diaphragm you need.

How does it work?

- The diaphragm is a barrier. It stops the egg from meeting the sperm by covering the cervix. Use spermicide with the diaphragm.
- The diaphragm will prevent pregnancy 84-94% of the time.
- You need to use it every time you have sexual intercourse.

How do I use the diaphragm?

- Ask your doctor or nurse to show you how to put it in properly.
- Put about a teaspoon of spermicidal jelly around the rim and in the centre of the diaphragm.
- Put the diaphragm in your vagina before you have sexual intercourse (up to 6 hours before sex).
- Use an applicator to put more spermicidal jelly into your vagina if you wait more than one hour between inserting the diaphragm and having vaginal intercourse.
- Use an applicator to put more spermicidal jelly into your vagina if you are having intercourse more than once. Do not remove the diaphragm, because that would let the sperm in.
- If you find this too messy, use condoms for repeated intercourse while the diaphragm is in place.
- Leave the diaphragm in the vagina for 6-8 hours after the last intercourse. This is so the spermicide has time to kill the sperm. Do not douche, or take a bath during this time. Showers are okay. It is safe to leave it in for up to 24 hours, but not longer.
- To remove the diaphragm, hook your finger around the rim and pull.

How do I care for the diaphragm?

- Wash it with mild soap and water.
- Check for holes by holding it up to the light or running water into it.
- Dry it carefully and put it back into its container.

When will I need a new diaphragm?

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 or follow the manufacturer's instruction.

Does a diaphragm protect me from STIs and HIV?

- No. Always use a latex condom or female condom when you have sex to reduce the risk of getting an STI (sexually transmitted infection) or HIV infection.

Are there any side effects to a diaphragm?

- A very few women will get Toxic Shock Syndrome or urinary tract (bladder) infection.
- Some women may be allergic to the spermicide. It may cause skin irritation. Tiny tears in the skin will increase the risk of getting sexually transmitted infections such as HIV.

Where do I get a diaphragm?

- You need a doctor's prescription for a diaphragm.

Where can I get more information?

- From your health care provider, community health clinic, or public health nurse.
- From the Facts of Life On-Line: e-mail your questions to thefactsoflife@serc.mb.ca.

If this method fails, and if you don't want to get pregnant, see a health care provider or pharmacist for emergency contraception as soon as you can.

Glossary:

Cervix – The lower part of the uterus that opens into the vagina. It is also called the “neck of the uterus”.

Emergency Contraception – A method used to avoid pregnancy after sex, because a birth control method failed or was not used.

Spermicide – A product containing chemical that kills sperms. It comes in jellies, foam, suppositories, and film (a thin plastic-like square sheet).

Toxic Shock Syndrome – An infection that is caused by bacteria. It is a rare infection associated with the use of tampons.

Vagina – The muscular tube inside a woman's body where the menstrual blood comes out from the uterus, where a baby comes out from the uterus during childbirth, and where a penis can go in for vaginal intercourse.