

Diaphragm

What is it?

The diaphragm is a barrier method of birth control which is inserted in a woman's vaginal canal to prevent pregnancy. It is a dome-shaped rubber cup with a flexible rim and is designed to be used with a spermicidal cream or jelly and must be inserted into the vagina before intercourse. It fits snugly under the bottom portion of the cervix and behind the pubic bone creating a barrier between sperm and the cervix.

The diaphragm is available by prescription and must be fitted by a medical provider in order to ensure proper fitting and maximum effectiveness. However, women who experience chronic urinary tract infections, or are allergic to spermicide, rubber, latex or polyurethane may want to consult their health care provider prior to using it. Do not use a friend's diaphragm; a personal prescription is needed.

NOTE: The diaphragm is only a pregnancy avoidance method. It will NOT protect a woman from STDs or HIV/AIDS. Condoms should be used with every sexual encounter to help prevent STDs.

Effectiveness

When used with a spermicide, the diaphragm is effective and reliable. If the diaphragm has no defects (i.e., rips or tears) and it is used correctly, the failure rate is as low as 6%. However, there is up to a 20% failure rate that may be due to the following:

- Incorrect or inconsistent use (it's not used for every act of intercourse)
- Improper fitting
- Premature insertion or removal
- Defects in the diaphragm (holes or tears)
- Used without spermicide

How does it work?

The diaphragm prevents pregnancy by acting as a barrier between sperm and the cervix. Correct placement of the diaphragm will block the sperm from penetrating the cervix and entering the uterus. Secondly, when used with the spermicidal cream or jelly that comes with it, sperm are killed on contact.

Your medical provider should give you ample time to learn how to correctly insert and remove the diaphragm before you leave the office. If you do not feel confident, practice inserting and removing it before you leave the doctor's office until you can do it correctly. This will insure the highest level of effectiveness.

How do I use it?

The diaphragm can be inserted up to six hours before engaging in intercourse. However, since the spermicide may begin to lose effectiveness after 2 hours, you may need to apply an additional dose of spermicidal cream or jelly directly into the vagina. Read the directions for your particular brand.

1. Wash your hands first.
2. Before inserting the diaphragm, place an applicator-full or a teaspoon of spermicidal jelly or cream onto the diaphragm, spreading it around the inner cup.
3. Hold the diaphragm in one hand with the jelly/cream side facing up.
4. Squeeze the sides of the diaphragm together so that it is folded in half.
5. Use your other hand to spread the lips of your vagina.
6. Insert the folded diaphragm into your vaginal canal.
7. Push the diaphragm downward and back into the vagina as far as it will go.
8. Tuck the front rim of the diaphragm up along the roof of your vagina and behind your pubic bone. You should feel the diaphragm slip into place.
9. Insure proper placement by making sure the diaphragm is not sticking out of the vagina. Check that your cervix is covered. If it is uncomfortable, it is probably not inserted correctly. If the diaphragm is inserted and fitted properly, you should not feel it while it is in place.

During Intercourse

Once inserted, the diaphragm and spermicide is effective for one act of intercourse. If more than one act is desired, more spermicide must be added.

DO NOT REMOVE THE DIAPHRAGM BETWEEN REPEATED ACTS OF INTERCOURSE.

Leave the diaphragm IN and insert an applicator-full of spermicide into the vagina.

IMPORTANT

You must leave the diaphragm in the vagina for at least 6-8 hours following your last act of intercourse. Sperm can live in the vaginal canal for up to 8 hours and can live in the uterus for 3-5 days. Removing the diaphragm immediately following intercourse will GREATLY increase your risk of pregnancy.

To Remove

1. Wash your hands first.
2. Hook your finger over the front rim of the diaphragm.
3. Pull the diaphragm out of the vagina.
4. Be careful of tearing from long finger nails!

Diaphragm Care

After each use, wash the diaphragm with warm soapy water. Fill the diaphragm cup with water to check for leaks or tears of any kind. Pour out the water, let it dry and store the diaphragm in its case. Cornstarch or non-perfumed powder can be used to assist in drying.

The diaphragm should be re-fitted by a medical provider about once per year, or if one of the following occurs:

- Weight gain or loss of 10 pounds or more.
- You have had a child since your last fitting.
- You have had pelvic surgery since your last fitting.
- Either you or your partner are experiencing discomfort during use.

What are the side effects?

The following side effects may occur:

- An allergic reaction to the diaphragm or spermicide which may include an itching and/or burning sensation in the genital area.
- If left in too long, a foul odor and/or vaginal infection may result.
- Vaginal trauma, scratching or injuring the vaginal canal could result if the woman is not careful or practiced in insertion and removal of the diaphragm.

REMEMBER

- Always use the diaphragm with its spermicidal cream or jelly.
- DO NOT use petroleum/oil based products (Vaseline) with the diaphragm.
- Leave the diaphragm in for at least 6-8 hours following your last act of intercourse.
- DO NOT remove the diaphragm to insert more spermicidal cream/jelly.
- Practice inserting and removing the diaphragm to insure competence before you use it for the first time!
- Make sure you have the diaphragm and cream/jelly available when it is needed.

For More Information:

Student Health Services 619-594-5281
Health Promotion. 619-594-4133
Emergency Contraception Hotline 1-888-NOT-2-LATE
Visit Our Website at <http://shs.sdsu.edu>
Facebook/Twitter. AZTEChalth

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