



About the Diaphragm

The diaphragm is a soft rubber cup with a flexible rim around the edge. Its purpose is to hold contraceptive cream or jelly over the cervix and to block the entrance of sperm. The correct size and type must be individually fit by a medical practitioner. The effectiveness rate of a diaphragm is 82 to 97 percent. The effectiveness is increased greatly when it is used correctly. It must be used every time you have intercourse--including before, during, and after menstrual periods. Adequate amounts of spermicidal jelly or cream must be used when the diaphragm is inserted. If intercourse is repeated, additional jelly or cream must be inserted without removing the diaphragm. At mid-cycle (when ovulation usually occurs) the use of foam or condoms in addition to the diaphragm will give added protection.

- Contraception is a shared responsibility. Partners can help with the diaphragm too.
- Neither you nor your partner should notice the diaphragm if it has been fitted (sized) and put in correctly. The rubber dome is soft and smooth and cannot be distinguished from the vaginal surface.
- If you have or suspect an allergy/sensitivity to Latex, you should **not** use the diaphragm.

How to Use the Diaphragm

- 1) It can be inserted up to six (6) hours before (or right before) you have intercourse. If it has been in longer than two (2) hours before intercourse you should insert an applicator of spermicide.
- 2) The diaphragm is most easily inserted while squatting, standing with one leg raised, or lying in a comfortable position. Examine yourself first, feeling for the inside edge of the pubic bone and the cervix. The cervix feels like a firm knob projecting into the vagina.
- 3) Hold the diaphragm with the dome toward the floor. Place about one tablespoon of spermicidal cream or jelly inside the cup of the diaphragm and smear jelly to the inside edge of the rim.
- 4) With one hand, hold the diaphragm with the dome down and pinch into a long, narrow shape. With the other hand, hold the vaginal lips apart and insert the diaphragm toward the tailbone, down and back into the vagina as far as it will go. Tuck the front rim of the diaphragm up behind the ridge in the vagina created by the pubic bone. *Feel for the cervix to be certain that the cervix is completely covered by the diaphragm.*
- 5) If you have intercourse more than once, insert an applicator of spermicide before each repeated intercourse. **DO NOT REMOVE THE DIAPHRAGM TO DO THIS.**
- 6) If you go to the bathroom before intercourse, insert an applicator of spermicide into the vagina. If you have a bowel movement, check again to see that the diaphragm is in place.
- 7) To make sure that the sperm in the vagina are killed, the diaphragm must remain in place six to eight (6-8) hours after the last act of intercourse. Do not douche. If necessary, the diaphragm may remain in place up to 24 hours.

8) To remove the diaphragm, hook a finger over the front rim, strain down at the same time, and pull the diaphragm downward and out.

(Cont.)

9) After removal, the diaphragm should be washed with mild soap and warm water. Dry it well; hold it up to the light and stretch the rubber to check for tears or holes, especially along the rim. Powder the diaphragm with cornstarch to keep the moisture away. Vaseline, talcum, and body creams may damage the diaphragm.

Check List

- Check your diaphragm for holes.
- Always check to see that the cervix is covered before intercourse.
- Always use spermicidal jelly or cream. Never use vaseline or oil-based lubricants and medications because they will damage the rubber and do not kill the sperm.
- To be effective, the diaphragm must be used with each intercourse--even during a menstrual period.
- Fitting should be checked once a year at your annual exam and always after childbirth, a miscarriage, a therapeutic abortion, surgery, or a weight gain or loss of 15 pounds or more.
- With proper care, the diaphragm is good for at least two years.

Important Things to Remember

- The diaphragm provides **SOME** protection from sexually transmitted infections, but condoms should be used in addition when this is a concern.
- Diaphragm users have a slightly higher risk of urinary tract infections. You can help prevent this by drinking plenty of fluids, urinating as soon as you feel the need, and most importantly, urinating after intercourse.
- Always check the expiration date of the spermicidal cream or jelly.
- Toxic shock syndrome (TSS) is a rare but serious disorder. Although a few cases of TSS have been reported in association with diaphragm use, it is unclear if it truly increases a woman's risk. The danger signs include:

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| * Sudden high fever | * Dizziness | * Aching muscles |
| * Vomiting | * Weakness | * Sunburn-like rash |
| * Diarrhea | | |

Contact your medical practitioner if you experience these symptoms.