



Spermicides

Spermicides are a reversible barrier method of birth control. It is available in a variety of contraceptive preparations, including foams, creams, jellies, film, and suppositories, which are liquids that melt after they are inserted. These products are inserted deep into the vagina shortly before intercourse. The chemical spermicide that they contain immobilizes sperm—preventing it from joining with an egg.

How Spermicide Works

Contraceptive foams block the entrance to the uterus with bubbles and contain a spermicide that immobilizes sperm. Contraceptive creams, jellies, film and suppositories melt into a thick liquid throughout the vagina. They block the entrance to the uterus and contain spermicide that immobilizes sperm.

How Well Spermicide Works

Of 100 women who use contraceptive foam, cream, jelly, film, or suppositories, 29 will become pregnant during the first year of typical use. 15 will become pregnant with perfect use. Using condoms increases effectiveness.

Spermicide provides no protection against sexually transmitted infections. Latex and female condoms can reduce the risk of infection.

Advantages of Spermicide

Contraceptive foams, creams, jellies, film, or suppositories can be used by just about any woman who wants to use them, but shouldn't be used many times a day. Some people may be sensitive to certain brands—they can try different ones.

How Spermicide is Used

Detailed instructions for correct use are included in the packaging. Be sure to read and understand them before you use any of these products.

Contraceptive foams, creams, jellies, film, or suppositories usually require waiting 10 minutes after insertion before intercourse can begin. These methods typically only remain effective for one hour after insertion. Usually, a woman lies down or squats, then gently inserts the contraceptive deep into her vagina. More spermicide must be inserted each time vaginal intercourse is repeated. Women who douche should not do so 6-8 hours after intercourse.

Possible Disadvantages of Spermicide

- ◆ If not used exactly as directed, these products may not form a good barrier over the cervix. Some women complain of messiness or leakage.
- ◆ Spermicide may irritate the penis or vagina. Switching brands may solve this problem.
- ◆ Using the spermicide nonoxynol-9 many times a day, by people at risk for HIV, or for anal sex, may irritate tissue and increase the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections