

Patient Information:

Diaphragm

What is a diaphragm?

The diaphragm is a birth control device worn inside the vagina and inserted just prior to, and worn during, intercourse. It is a round dome of soft latex rubber with a firm spring border. A properly measured and fitted diaphragm will rest comfortably inside the vagina and will not be felt by either partner. The diaphragm must be used with spermicidal jelly or cream.

How does the diaphragm work?

The diaphragm is not a complete barrier. It works by holding spermicide against the cervix (opening to the uterus), which kills or immobilizes the sperm in the vagina before they can get into the uterus.

Does everyone use the same size diaphragm?

No. Each woman is measured for her diaphragm size as follows:

1. A trained practitioner estimates the size and shape of the women's vagina during the pelvic examination.
2. Sample rings or diaphragms are tried in the vagina and checked for proper fit.
3. The woman is then instructed on how to use, insert, and remove the diaphragm.
4. The practitioner will write a prescription for the correct size diaphragm. With this prescription, the woman may purchase a diaphragm at any outside pharmacy.
5. It is important to practice inserting and removing of the diaphragm before using it. If there are any questions (especially if there is any discomfort or if the diaphragm seems too small) the practitioner should be notified.

How do you insert a diaphragm?

Instructions for inserting a diaphragm:

1. Wash your hands.
2. Put spermicidal jelly or cream (at least one teaspoonful) into the concave dish of the diaphragm.
3. Spread the spermicidal jelly around the inside of

the dome and the rim.

4. In a comfortable position (squatting, lying down, or standing with one foot on a short stool) squeeze the sides of the diaphragm together with one hand, spread the lips of the vagina with the other hand, insert the diaphragm with the dome pointing down and then push the diaphragm behind the pubic bone.
5. Once inside the vagina, the diaphragm should be checked to see that it is covering the cervix (it will feel like the end of your nose covered with latex).

How and when should a diaphragm be used?

- ◆ Insert the diaphragm no more than two hours before intercourse since the spermicide potency may be diluted by vaginal secretions. It is most effective if inserted just before intercourse.
- ◆ You must leave the diaphragm in place for six to eight hours after intercourse. This allows time for the spermicide to immobilize and kill sperm.
- ◆ If you have intercourse more than one time, do not remove the diaphragm. Rather, insert an applicator of spermicide into the vagina before each subsequent intercourse without disturbing the diaphragm.
- ◆ The diaphragm does not provide any STD protection, therefore you should always use a condom. In addition, using a condom and a diaphragm (consistently and correctly) will decrease your chances of becoming pregnant.

How do you take care of your diaphragm?

- ◆ Clean the diaphragm after each use. Wash it with mild soap, dry and powder it with cornstarch (do not use talcum powder), place it back in its container and store it in a cool place.
- ◆ Frequently check your diaphragm for holes. You can check it one of two different ways:
 - ◇ Hold it up to the light and see if light shines through.
 - ◇ Fill it with water and check for leaks. If you

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find any holes, call your practitioner immediately.

- ◆ Use only water based lubricants such as spermicidal jelly or cream with your diaphragm. Petroleum based products such as Vaseline, baby oil, sun tan lotion, etc. can destroy the latex rubber of the diaphragm.

When does the fit of the diaphragm need to be checked by a practitioner?

- ◆ If your normal weight changes by 10 pounds or more.
- ◆ If you have recently given birth.
- ◆ Otherwise, the diaphragm fit should be checked once a year.

REMEMBER!

DO NOT PUT ANYTHING IN THE VAGINA (INCLUDING YOUR DIAPHRAGM) 3 TO 4 DAYS BEFORE THE PAP TEST. WHEN YOU COME FOR YOUR TEST, BRING YOUR DIAPHRAGM SO IT CAN BE CHECKED FOR PROPER FIT.

Advantages:

Offers immediate contraceptive protection

- ◆ Has no side effects
- ◆ Can be put in up to two hours ahead of time
- ◆ Partner can't feel it
- ◆ Does not contain hormones
- ◆ Cost effective

Disadvantages:

- ◆ Must remember to use it every time
- ◆ Not as spontaneous
- ◆ Must remain in vagina 6 to 8 hours after intercourse
- ◆ Does not provide protection against STDs
- ◆ Vaginal irritation
- ◆ Urinary tract infections
- ◆ Must be fitted by a health care provider