

Diaphragm

What is the diaphragm?

The diaphragm is a flexible rubber cup that is inserted into the vagina and fits over the cervix. It is used with a spermicide.

How effective is the diaphragm?

If always used correctly, 6 out of 100 women who use the diaphragm will get pregnant each year. If not always used correctly, 16 out of 100 women who use the diaphragm will get pregnant each year.

Using spermicide with the diaphragm makes it much more effective at preventing pregnancy.

How does it work?

The diaphragm covers the cervix to block sperm from entering the uterus. The spermicide also kills sperm so it cannot reach the uterus.

Diaphragms come in different sizes. A health care provider will fit you for the right size and show you how to use it. If your body changes in certain ways, you might need a different size diaphragm. Get your provider to check the fit if your weight changes 10 or more pounds or if you get pregnant.

- To use the diaphragm, first cover the inside of it with spermicide. Then insert it into your vagina so that it covers your cervix.
- You can insert the diaphragm up to 6 hours before sex. You should leave it in for at least 6 hours after the last time you have sex. Don't leave it in for more than 24 hours.
- If you want to have sex again before 6 hours have passed, add more spermicide into the vagina. You do not need to remove the diaphragm when you do this.
- Do not use the diaphragm when you have your period.

What are the benefits of using the diaphragm?

- The diaphragm is safe, simple, and convenient.
- You can insert the diaphragm ahead of time so that it doesn't interrupt sexual activity.
- With proper care, your diaphragm should last about two years.

What are the downsides of using the diaphragm?

- The diaphragm does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- You must use the diaphragm each time you have sex.
- Getting a diaphragm requires a visit to a health care provider and a prescription.
- The diaphragm is less effective at preventing pregnancy than some other birth control methods.
- The diaphragm cannot be used when you have your period.
- The diaphragm can cause vaginal irritation. This may put you at risk for infection.

Where can I get the diaphragm?

A trained health care provider can determine the right size diaphragm for you and give you a prescription. You can purchase it at a drugstore or clinic.

Where can I get more information?

For more information on the diaphragm, talk to your health care provider.

Compare the diaphragm to other birth control options using ACOG's Method Match at www.arh.org/MethodMatch.