

## Diaphragm

### **How the diaphragm works:**

The diaphragm is a dome-shaped rubber (latex) cup with a stiff rim. It is used with a special gel or cream that contains a spermicide (a substance that kills sperm). You insert the diaphragm and spermicide together into your vagina and over your cervix to keep sperm from entering your uterus. The diaphragm comes in different types and many sizes. You must be fitted for a diaphragm by a trained doctor or health provider.

### **How to use the diaphragm:**

- Empty your bladder (pee) and wash your hands.
- Squeeze a tbslp of spermicidal gel into the diaphragm cup and smear it around the rim.
- Insert the diaphragm into your vagina as instructed when it was fitted.  
The cup must cover the cervix. Insert your finger into your vagina to check that the diaphragm is in place.
- The diaphragm can be inserted into the vagina up to six hours before sexual intercourse. It is effective immediately. If it is more than six hours, add an extra application of spermicidal gel. Leave the diaphragm in place for six hours after sex but not longer than a total of 24 hours. Do not douche with the diaphragm in place.

If you have sex more than once, add more spermicidal gel into the vagina each time.

- To remove the diaphragm, slip a finger into your vagina and under the rim and gently slide it out.
- Take good care of your diaphragm by washing it gently in warm water and mild soap. Rinse well, pat dry, dust with cornstarch and put back into its case.
- Check the diaphragm often for holes or weak spots, especially around the rim. Never use a diaphragm with a hole.
- Keep a supply of spermicidal gel on hand; check for an expiration date on each tube. Do not use after the expiration date.
- The diaphragm should be refitted if you gain or lose 10 pounds or more, or if you have a birth, a late trimester abortion, or pelvic surgery.

### **Where can you get a diaphragm?**

Getting a diaphragm requires an exam, a fitting and a prescription from a qualified health care provider. When you are fitted for your diaphragm, it is important that your provider also offers teaching and some time for you to practice inserting and removing your diaphragm. Call your local family planning clinic for information.

### **Effectiveness:**

About 6 in 100 women will get pregnant in one year (94% effectiveness) if they use the diaphragm every time they have sex and use it correctly (perfect use). If you don't use your diaphragm every time you have sex or you don't add more spermicidal gel with each act of intercourse or it slips out of place (typical use), your chance of pregnancy goes up.

### **Benefits of the diaphragm:**

It can be used only when needed, with very few side effects or major health risks. It can be put in before sex and still be effective up to six hours later. Using the diaphragm does not require the direct involvement of the male partner and does not interrupt lovemaking.

**Potential side effects or disadvantages:**

Some people are allergic to the latex rubber. Some people are allergic to the spermicidal gel or cream; if this happens, try another brand. Planning ahead is required. You must be comfortable with inserting and removing the diaphragm. The diaphragm does not protect against STIs or HIV (AIDS).

**Potential risks:**

Some women find that the diaphragm may cause bladder discomfort or an increased risk of bladder irritation or infections. If you have any pain or discomfort, you should see your doctor or health care provider. Wearing a diaphragm for longer than 48 hours is not recommended because of possible risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS).

Danger signs for TSS:

- Sudden high fever
  - Vomiting, diarrhea
  - Dizziness, faintness, weakness
- (over)

GENERAL REFERENCE: Contraceptive Technology: 18th Rev. Ed., 2004

