

Whole Woman's Health of Austin
Transforming Healthcare One Woman at a Time
8401 North IH 35 Suite 200 * Austin TX 78753
(512) 250 – 1005 * (800) 282 – 1005

THE DIAPHRAGM

What is it?

The diaphragm is a thin rubber cup attached to a flexible rim. Spermicidal cream or jelly must be placed inside the diaphragm to be effective in preventing pregnancy.

How does it work?

When it is properly inserted, the diaphragm holds the spermicidal jelly or cream onto the cervix (the entrance to the uterus). Together the diaphragm and the spermicide block the sperm from entering the uterus, and the spermicide serves to kill off the sperm following intercourse. To be effective, the spermicidal jelly or cream must be applied around the rim of the diaphragm and inside the rubber cup before the diaphragm is placed inside of the woman. **Never** use a diaphragm without the spermicidal cream or jelly.

How do I use it? How do I get it?

A doctor or clinician needs to do a pelvic exam to determine what size diaphragm a woman needs, and to teach her how to use it. The doctor or clinician will write a prescription for the woman, and she may pick up her diaphragm and jelly or cream at any pharmacy. A woman needs to be refitted for her diaphragm after any pregnancy, or with any weight loss or gain of 10 pounds, as her diaphragm size may change. The clinician will teach you how to properly insert the diaphragm.

The diaphragm and spermicide may be inserted up to two hours before intercourse. If sex is repeated, more cream or jelly must be added before each new act of intercourse. The diaphragm must be left in place for at least 6 hours after the last intercourse.

After removal, wash the diaphragm with mild soap and warm water. Rinse and dry it carefully. You may sprinkle the diaphragm with cornstarch to prevent the rubber from deteriorating. Before you store the diaphragm in its case, hold it to the light and check for holes. Be sure to check the diaphragm for holes and tears before using it again.

What are the advantages?

There are no hormones in the diaphragm and side effects are very rare. It is an immediately reversible birth control method. It is usually very comfortable for both partners, and not felt if it is properly in place. (If it is felt, consult your clinician.) Many women appreciate that the diaphragm interferes with sex less than other methods since they can put the diaphragm in hours before sex.

What are the disadvantages? What are the possible side effects?

Forethought and preparation are required-- the diaphragm and cream or jelly must be placed before intercourse, and must be used every time in order to be effective. Women who use diaphragms are more prone to bladder infections.

How effective is it?

When the diaphragm is used correctly every time a couple has intercourse, the diaphragm is 94% effective at preventing pregnancy. This means that for every 100 users, 94 of them will be protected against pregnancy.

Who cannot use this method?

Women who are allergic to latex, silicone, or spermicide should not use a diaphragm. Difficulty inserting the diaphragm or discomfort touching your genitals may make it difficult to use the diaphragm. A sagging uterus, vaginal obstructions, or poor vaginal muscle tone may also interfere with use. Women who have recently had a baby or an abortion should not insert anything into their vaginal without talking to their clinician first.

***Remember, only a latex condom or polyurethane condom can protect you from HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases.

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How to Use the Diaphragm

Wash hands with soap and water. Put about a tablespoon of spermicide in the cup. Spread some around the rim. Find a comfortable position – stand with one foot on a chair, sit on the edge of a chair, lie down, or squat.



Separate the labia with one hand. Pinch the rim of the diaphragm to fold it in half with the other hand. Place index finger in the center of fold for a firmer grip. The spermicide must be inside the fold.



Push as far up and back in the vagina as possible. Tuck behind the pubic bone. Make sure the cervix is covered. It must stay in place six hours after last act of intercourse. If intercourse is repeated or occurs more than six hours after insertion, leave the diaphragm in place and apply more spermicide. Do not leave the diaphragm in place for more than 24 hours.



To remove, wash hands with soap and water. Hook a finger over the top of the rim to break the suction. Pull the diaphragm down and out. A special inserter can be used to help with placement and removal.

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