

THE DIAPHRAGM

The diaphragm is a contraceptive method used by the woman. It prevents pregnancy **only** if used with a spermicidal cream or jelly. These preparations immobilize and kill sperm. The diaphragm acts as a cup to hold the spermicide in place near the cervix (opening of the uterus).

Diaphragms come in a number of different sizes and need to be fitted by an experienced clinician.

The diaphragm is quite effective in preventing pregnancy if used correctly and consistently. For optimal effectiveness, it is important to follow the **Instructions for Use**.

Instructions for Use

- To apply spermicide, hold the diaphragm with the dome down (like a cup). Squeeze about 2-3 teaspoons of jelly or cream from the tube into the dome.
- The diaphragm may be inserted just before intercourse, or up to 6 hours before intercourse.
- Check the position of the diaphragm. When correctly placed, the back rim is below and behind the cervix and the front rim is tucked behind the pubic bone. Use an index finger to locate the cervix. (It feels much like the tip of your nose.) The cervix should be covered by the soft rubber dome of the diaphragm. Then check to be sure the front rim is snugly in place behind the pubic bone.
- Do not remove the diaphragm for at least 6 hours after the last act of intercourse. It is all right to bathe or swim with the diaphragm in place. When the six hours are up, the diaphragm may be removed. Douching is neither necessary nor recommended. Try to remember the 6:6 rule: insert up to 6 hours before and leave in 6 hours after intercourse.
- If intercourse is repeated before the six hours have passed, insert an applicator-full of spermicide directly into the vagina without disturbing the diaphragm. Remember to leave the diaphragm in place for 6 hours after the last act of intercourse.
- To remove the diaphragm, hook one finger underneath or over the front rim and pull downward and out.

Diaphragm Care

- Wash with plain soap and warm water, rinse and dry. Periodically check for small holes by holding the diaphragm up to a light. Discoloration does not affect the use of the diaphragm. With good care, a diaphragm usually lasts for a number of years. Store in a cool place.
- The diaphragm size should be rechecked if any of the following occur: childbirth, a significant gain or loss of weight, an increase in urinary tract infections, or difficulty urinating or defecating while the diaphragm is in place.

Toxic Shock Syndrome

To minimize the risk for toxic shock, wash hands with soap and water before inserting or removing the diaphragm. Also, if at all possible, do not leave the diaphragm in place more than 24 hours.

A word about safer sex

While the diaphragm is an effective method for preventing pregnancy, it does not offer sufficient protection against contracting sexually-transmitted diseases. Seriously consider using condoms consistently in order to protect yourself and your partner(s). The use of condoms will also increase the contraceptive efficacy of the diaphragm.

For more information on safer sex guidelines, contact a clinic nurse, or discuss any questions you may have with a clinician or trained peer educator.

Check our website: www.uhs.berkeley.edu to learn more about this medical concern or others.

For an appointment www.uhs.berkeley.edu or call **510-642-2000**

Clinic Nurse **510-643-7197** for advice

2/2009