

SPERMICIDES

Spermicides are an over-the-counter form of birth control that can be purchased at pharmacies and other stores. They are used by the woman, and do not require a partner's participation. Different types include gels, creams, foams, film, and vaginal suppositories. The spermicide covers the cervix (the opening of the uterus at the end of the vagina) and kills sperm.

Used alone, spermicides offer only moderate protection against pregnancy (71% effective with typical use), and no protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Therefore, we recommend that spermicides be used with a condom or other barrier method (e.g. diaphragm).

Recent studies have shown that spermicides containing nonoxynol-9 can be irritating to the vagina, which may increase the risk of STIs and HIV in some women. If you experience irritation or other negative side effects, talk to your clinician.

Instructions for Use (check spermicide package for specific instructions):

- Use spermicide every time you have intercourse. Most methods require that you insert the spermicide at least 10-15 minutes before intercourse starts, and most are only effective for up to one hour after insertion. If you have intercourse a second time, you should apply spermicide again.
- *Applicator methods:*
 - *Foam:* Shake the can well. Fill the applicator with foam.
 - *Gel or cream:* Fill the applicator from the tube.
 - *Foam, gel, or cream:* Find a position where you can comfortably insert the applicator, such as squatting or lying down. The process is similar to inserting a tampon. Insert the applicator into your vagina as far as you can, then press the plunger to deposit the spermicide against your cervix. Remove the applicator with the plunger still pushed down. You can keep the applicator clean by washing it with warm water and mild soap.
- *Film:* Make sure your fingers are dry before you take the film out of the package. Put one sheet of film on your fingertip, and push it into your vagina as far as you can. Leave the film against your cervix.
- *Suppository:* Remove the suppository from its package. Push it into your vagina as far as you can, so that it rests against your cervix.
- Douching is not recommended, as the vagina keeps itself clean naturally. If for some reason you want to douche, wait until at least 6 hours after intercourse.

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