

DIAPHRAGM

WHAT IS A DIAPHRAGM?

- A diaphragm is a soft latex cup that covers the cervix when used as an FP method.
- The cup is provided with a rim that is firm with a flexible spring that keeps the diaphragm in place.
- It is used with a spermicidal cream, jelly, or foam to improve effectiveness.
- It comes in different sizes and requires fitting by a trained provider.
- It works by blocking sperm cells from entering the cervix while the spermicide kills or disables the sperm from meeting the egg.



HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE DIAPHRAGM?

- The effectiveness of this method depends on the user. The risk of pregnancy is greatest when the diaphragm with spermicide is not used during every sexual intercourse.
- When typically used, about 16 of 100 women who use the diaphragm with spermicide become pregnant over the first year. This means that 84 of every 100 women using the diaphragm will not become pregnant.
- When used correctly with every sexual intercourse, about 6 of 100 women who use the diaphragm with spermicide become pregnant over the first year.
- A diaphragm may provide some protection against certain STIs but should not be relied on as the only protection against STIs.

HOW IS THE DIAPHRAGM USED?

A client can use a diaphragm any time but must wait for six weeks if the client had a full-term delivery or had a second trimester abortion. The provider of this method must observe the following steps:

1. Use proper infection prevention procedures.
2. Instruct the client to assume a lithotomy position for a pelvic examination, and assess for conditions (e.g., uterine prolapse) that may make the diaphragm improper to use.
3. Perform an internal examination to assess the cervix and determine the diaphragm size.
4. Insert a special fitting diaphragm into the client's vagina, and apply it to cover the cervix, making sure that the diaphragm fits properly and does not come out easily.

The following steps must be observed by the user when using a diaphragm:

1. Check the diaphragm for any damage, including the expiration date of the spermicide. Insert the diaphragm less than six hours before having sex. After hand washing with soap and water, squeeze a spoonful of spermicidal cream, jelly, or foam into the diaphragm and around the rim.
2. Press the rim together to ease the insertion of the device into the vagina. Assume a position that is comfortable for insertion: squatting, raising one leg, sitting, or lying down. While holding the diaphragm with the fingers pressing on the rim, insert the diaphragm into the vagina until the cervix is felt, and then apply it to cover the cervix.
3. Feel the diaphragm and the rim to make sure that it covers the entire cervix, fits properly, and does not come out easily.
4. Keep the diaphragm in place for at least 6 hours after having sex but no

longer than 24 hours. For multiple sexual intercourse, make sure that the diaphragm is in the correct position, and insert additional spermicide in front of the cap before each sexual intercourse.

5. To remove the diaphragm, wash hands with soap and water, insert finger to feel for the rim, then gently slide a finger under the rim of the diaphragm to pull it down and out.
6. Wash the diaphragm with mild soap and water and dry it after each use.

WHO CAN AND CANNOT USE THE DIAPHRAGM?

- Nearly all women can use the diaphragm safely and effectively.
- Women with severe allergic reaction to latex cannot use this method but can use a plastic-made diaphragm.
- Women with HIV infection or at high risk of HIV infection are not advised to use the diaphragm.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH BENEFITS, RISKS, AND COMPLICATIONS OF DIAPHRAGM USE?

- The diaphragm protects against the risk of pregnancy.
- The known health risks include urinary tract infection, bacterial vaginosis, or candidiasis.
- The side effects may include vaginal lesions or irritation in or around the vagina or penis.

HOW ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS ADDRESSED?

- Women with allergic reactions to a latex rubber-made diaphragm should use a plastic-made diaphragm.
- The provider can counsel the client to use other effective methods.

WHAT IMPORTANT INFORMATION SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO THE CLIENT WHO CHOOSES TO USE THE DIAPHRAGM?

- Ensure that the client understands the correct use of the diaphragm by allowing her to repeat how and when to insert and remove the diaphragm.
- Explain that the procedure becomes easier with time, i.e., the more practice she has with inserting and removing the diaphragm, the easier it will get.
- Describe common side effects, such as itching and irritation in or around the vagina or penis and how to go about it.
- Clarify that a diaphragm that becomes thin, damaged, or stiff should not be used and should be replaced. The diaphragm should be replaced every two years.

WHAT SHOULD BE INQUIRED FROM OR ADVISED TO THE CLIENT DURING FOLLOW-UP?

- Ask how the client is doing with the method and whether she is satisfied. Ask if she has questions or anything to discuss.
- Ask if she has any trouble using a diaphragm correctly every time she has sex. Give her any information or help that she needs.
- Ask a long-term client if she has had any new health problems since her last visit. Address problems accordingly.
- Inquire from a long-term client any major life changes that may affect her needs, particularly plans for having children and about the risk of STIs or HIV.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN CLIENTS STOP USING THE DIAPHRAGM?

A client who stops using this method faces the risk of getting pregnant and the risk of getting STIs or HIV.

WHAT ARE THE FACTS ABOUT DIAPHRAGMS?

Contrary to popular beliefs, a diaphragm does not

- affect the enjoyment of sex.
- pass through the cervix.
- cause cervical cancer.

WHAT COUNSELING TIPS SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO A CLIENT WHO CHOOSES TO USE THE DIAPHRAGM?

- The diaphragm should be fitted at least six weeks after childbirth or second trimester abortion, when the uterus and cervix have returned to normal size. However, recommend the use of an alternative method until the sixth week.
- Reiterate that the risk of pregnancy is greatest when the diaphragm with spermicide is not used during every sexual intercourse.
- Do not provide a diaphragm for clients who have HIV infections or at high risk for HIV infections. Suggest using condoms instead.