

Women's Health

The Diaphragm

What is it?

A diaphragm is a dome-shaped soft rubber cup with a flexible rim. When fitted correctly, it covers the cervix (the opening to the womb) and is held securely in place behind the pubic bone and the rear wall of your vagina.

How does it Work?

The diaphragm prevents pregnancy by stopping sperm from entering your cervical canal. It also holds a jelly or cream which kills sperm that may manage to swim around the rim of the diaphragm.

The diaphragm must be prescribed by a health care provider who will make sure that you get the right size.

Using the Diaphragm:

Preparing to insert the diaphragm

1. Before inserting the diaphragm, urinate and wash your hands.
2. Put about a teaspoon of contraceptive cream or jelly into the cup of the diaphragm. (Be sure to use with contraceptive cream or jelly, not a lubricant)
3. Spread a small amount around the edge with your fingertip (don't apply too much cream to the rim, or it will become slippery and hard to hold).
4. Find a position that is comfortable for you to insert the diaphragm. Three possible positions you can try are standing up with one leg up, squatting or lying down with legs flexed.

Inserting the diaphragm

1. Hold the diaphragm with the dome facing down (the spermicide up) and press the opposite sides of the rim together between your thumb and third finger. You can hold the diaphragm from above or below.
2. Push the compressed diaphragm gently inward along the rear wall of the vagina (back towards your backbone, not straight in) as far as it can go. Keep your index finger on the outer rim of the diaphragm and use it to help guide the diaphragm into place. Use your index finger to push the front rim of the diaphragm up until it is locked in place just above the pubic bone.
3. Use your index finger to check that the diaphragm is in place over the cervix. When the diaphragm is correctly positioned, you should not be aware that it is in place.

Removing the diaphragm

To remove the diaphragm, put your index finger behind the front rim and pull the diaphragm down and out.

Points to Remember

- To prevent pregnancy, the diaphragm must be used every time you have intercourse.
- The diaphragm should always be used with a spermicidal jelly or cream.
- The diaphragm may be inserted up to 6 hours before intercourse. If it has been more than 6 hours between insertion of the diaphragm and intercourse, you must insert additional contraceptive jelly or cream. You do not need to remove the diaphragm to insert additional spermicide. Simply fill and insert the applicator, making sure that the jelly or cream is inserted into the upper part of the vagina.
- The diaphragm should remain in place for at least 6 hours after intercourse and should be removed soon after that.
- After use, wash your diaphragm with mild soap and water. Store in a cool dry place. Do not use if the diaphragm looks dry, cracked, or has a tear.