

## *Woman's Health Options*

### *Vaginal Spermicides*

#### ***What Are Vaginal Spermicides?***

Vaginal spermicides are products containing an ingredient (Nonoxynol-9) that kills sperm on contact. Spermicide is inserted into the vagina before sex to help prevent pregnancy.

Spermicides are available as film, foam, suppositories, cream, and gel. *Vaginal spermicides do not offer protection from sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS.*

#### ***Do They Work?***

- Spermicidal effectiveness rates vary widely. The failure rate can be around 26%.

#### ***How Are They Used?***

- Vaginal spermicides should not be used alone. They should be used with another form of birth control (ex. condoms).
- Use the correct amount of spermicide, following the package directions.
- Insert the spermicide high into your vagina, to cover your cervix, before sex.
- Insert another spermicide application into your vagina each time you have sex.
- Wait the recommended time listed on the package, between insertion and sex.
- Do not rinse or douche your vagina for at least 6 hours after sex.

#### ***Instructions:***

Check the expiry date – do not use spermicide film, foam, suppository, cream, or gel that is outdated.

##### *Film:*

- Insert film at least 15 minutes, but not more than 3 hours, before sex.
- Place the folded film over your dry index finger, and push the film into your vagina, at or near the cervix. Inserting the film takes practice.

##### *Foam:*

- Insert foam immediately, but not more than 1 hour, before sex.
- Shake the foam container, and then fill the applicator with foam. Insert the applicator into your vagina, at or near your cervix. Hold the applicator in place and depress the plunger. Remove the applicator.

##### *Gel/Cream:*

- Gels/creams are used with a diaphragm or cervical cap; they should not be used alone.
- Insert gel/cream 10 to 15 minutes before sex.
- Fill the applicator with gel. Insert the applicator into your vagina, at or near your cervix. Hold the applicator in place and depress the plunger. Remove the applicator.

*Suppository:*

- Insert suppository 10 to 15 minutes, but less than 1 hour, before sex.
- Place the suppository into your vagina, at or near your cervix.

***What Are The Advantages?***

- Vaginal spermicides can be purchased at a pharmacy or grocery store without a prescription.
- Vaginal spermicides provide extra lubrication during sex.
- Women who cannot use a hormonal birth control method have vaginal spermicide options.

***Things to Think About:***

- Spermicide should be used with a condom or other birth control method every time you have sex, to decrease the risk of pregnancy.
- The Nonoxynol-9 in many vaginal spermicides may cause vaginal or penile irritation, leading to tiny open areas in the vaginal lining or in penile foreskin. This can increase the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- Vaginal spermicides do not offer protection from HIV/STIs.
- Vaginal spermicides can be messy.
- You have to wait after inserting spermicide before having sex.
- Vaginal spermicides can cause irritation (ex. itchiness, redness, or pain). If this happens, you should stop using the spermicide and talk to your health care provider.
- Some women may not feel comfortable inserting the spermicide into their vagina.
- Some women experience more frequent urinary tract infections when a spermicide and condom or spermicide and diaphragm are used together.

***Sexual Decision Making:***

- You have the right to choose to have or not have sexual intercourse.
- If you choose to have sex you may want to think about the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Spermicide does not protect against STIs, including HIV/AIDS. One of the best ways to protect yourself is to use a condom when having sexual intercourse.
- It can be helpful to talk to your partner about these choices before you have sex.

***For More Information Call:***

The Birth Control Centre	735-0010
Options Sexual Health Association	423-3737
Woman's Health Options	484-1124
STD Clinic	413-5156

Canadian Women's Health Network – [www.cwhn.ca](http://www.cwhn.ca)  
Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada – [www.sexualityandu.ca](http://www.sexualityandu.ca)