

# The Diaphragm

## What Is A Diaphragm?

A diaphragm is made of latex (rubber) and is shaped like a saucer. It has a flexible rim. It covers the cervix (opening to the uterus) and stops sperm from entering. You need to be fitted for the right size of diaphragm by a doctor.

## Does It Work?

- In a year, 6 to 20 out of every 100 women will get pregnant while using the diaphragm.

## How Is It Used?

- You put the diaphragm in place before intercourse, and it must be kept in for at least 6 hours after intercourse.
- The diaphragm is used with a spermicide (cream or jelly that kills sperm).

## Instructions:

1. Put 1 tablespoon of spermicidal cream or jelly inside the diaphragm. The jelly should be on the side that will lie next to your cervix.
2. Lie down, squat, or raise one leg on a chair.
3. Squeeze the rim together and push the diaphragm into your vagina as far as it will go toward the backbone.
4. When the diaphragm is most of the way in, let go of it and tuck the front edge of the diaphragm up behind your pubic bone.
5. It is very important to make sure that you can feel your cervix (feels like the tip of your nose) covered by the soft rubber of the diaphragm.
6. You should not be aware of your diaphragm once it is correctly inserted. If it is uncomfortable, it is probably not in the right position. Remove it and try inserting it again.
7. To remove the diaphragm, put a finger behind the front rim and pull it down and out of your vagina.
8. Do **not** keep the diaphragm in your body longer than 24 hours.



Note: If you have intercourse **more than once** during this time:

- Leave the diaphragm in place.
- Insert an applicator of cream or jelly into your vagina.

## To care for your diaphragm:

- Wash your diaphragm after each use with mild, non-perfumed soap and warm water. Rinse and dry it completely.
- Store it in a cool, dry place.
- Check it regularly for holes by holding it up to the light.
- Replace your diaphragm every 1 to 2 years, or sooner if the rim is bent.

## What Are The Advantages?

- You can leave the diaphragm in place for up to 24 hours.
- It can be put in just before sex or up to 6 hours before sex.
- It is an option for women who cannot use a birth control method with hormones.
- It is reusable.

## Things to Think About:

- *Frequent use of Nonoxynol-9 (an ingredient in many of the spermicides you use with the diaphragm) may cause vaginal irritation, leading to tiny open areas in the vaginal lining. This can increase the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).*
- If you want extra lubrication (slipperiness), use only a water-based cream or jelly like KY Jelly or Astroglide. Do not use oil-based products (like Vaseline or mineral oil) because they cause the latex in your diaphragm to break down and can also cause health problems.
- Some women may get cystitis (bladder infection). Empty your bladder before you insert the diaphragm.
- A diaphragm may not fit well for women who have retroverted uteruses or cervical, vaginal, or uterine abnormalities.
- Some women do not feel comfortable touching their vagina to insert and remove the diaphragm.
- Use a different form of birth control (like a condom) during your period, to avoid the small chance of Toxic Shock Syndrome.
- The diaphragm should be refitted if you gain or lose weight of 10 lbs (4.4 kg) or more, or if you have an abortion, miscarriage, or give birth.
- Yeast infection ovules or creams (ex. Monistat) may damage the latex in condoms, diaphragms, and cervical caps, which may result in unintended pregnancy. Abstinence is recommended while on the medication and for 3 days afterwards. If abstinence is not possible, using condoms is better than using nothing at all; however, there is a greater risk of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

## 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). The diaphragm 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
Planned Parenthood	423-3737
Morgentaler Clinic	484-1124
STD Clinic	413-5156