
▶ **What is a diaphragm?**

A diaphragm is a shallow dome-shaped latex cup with a flexible rim. It is inserted into the vagina and covers the cervix.

▶ **How does the diaphragm work?**

- It keeps sperm from going into the uterus to join with an egg
- It must be used with spermicide (cream, gel, or jelly) to stop sperm from moving.

▶ **How effective is the diaphragm?**

- When **always** used as directed, 6 out of 100 women will become pregnant each year
- When **not always** used as directed, 12 out of 100 women will become pregnant each year

To make the diaphragm more effective:

- Make sure the diaphragm covers the cervix
- Make sure spermicide is used
- Your partner can use a condom

The diaphragm does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

▶ **How safe is the diaphragm?**

Most women can use the diaphragm safely.

The diaphragm may not work for you if you:

- are uncomfortable touching your vulva and putting something into your vagina
- have difficulty inserting the diaphragm
- get frequent urinary tract infections

- have a sensitivity to silicone or spermicide
- find that it does not fit right have physical problems with your uterus or vagina

▶ **What are the benefits of a Diaphragm?**

- Low cost (about \$75 plus the cost of spermicide)
- Reusable – lasts up to 2 years with good care)
- An alternative for women who are unable to or choose not to use a hormonal method of contraception
- It is convenient and easy to carry in a pocket or purse
- Effective right after put in place
- Does not affect a woman's natural hormones
- Is safe for breastfeeding women
- It can be inserted hours ahead of sex

▶ **What are the disadvantages of the diaphragm?**

- Difficult to insert for some women
 - Can become dislodged during sex
 - Must always be in place for vaginal sex
 - Spermicides that contain nonoxynol-9 can irritate tissue and increase the risk of HIV and other STIs
- If you need to be fitted by your health care provider, you will require a prescription

▶ **How do I use the diaphragm?**

- Wash your hands with soap and water
- Put about 1-2 teaspoons of water-based spermicide in the cup and around the rim

- Find a comfortable position (one foot on a chair, sit on a chair, lie down, or squat)
- Separate vulva lips with one hand. Pinch the rim of the diaphragm with the other hand
- Put index finger in the centre fold of the diaphragm (spermicide inside the folds)
- Gently push the diaphragm cup up and back into your vagina and tuck the edge of the cup behind the pubic bone (make sure the cervix is covered)
- Leave diaphragm in place for 6-8 hours after sex and not more than 24 hours
- If you have sex more than once within the six hours you have the diaphragm in, add more spermicide to your vagina, using an applicator before each time. DO NOT remove the diaphragm.

How to remove after sex:

- Wash your hands with soap and water
- Use index finger to hook over the top of the rim to break the suction
- Pull cup down and out

▶ **How do I take care of my diaphragm?**

- Wash with mild soap and warm water after each use
- Allow to air dry
- Don't use oil-based lubricants (e.g. cold cream, Vaseline)
- Check your diaphragm regularly for break down (holes or weak spots), by holding it up to the light
- Don't use if it has weak spots, holes, wrinkles or cracks

▶ **Where do I get the diaphragm?**

- You may need to make an appointment with your health care provider to have the diaphragm fitted to your body and get a prescription to purchase
- Diaphragms can be purchased at a drug store or clinic with your prescription
- A new diaphragm (Caya), suitable for most women, is available without prescription and does not require fitting by your healthcare provider. It can be purchased at selected pharmacies by direct request.

▶ **Remember**

- **Always use a condom for protection against STIs**

▶ **Resources**

[Sexuality and U](#)
[Planned Parenthood](#)

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▶ **Who can you talk to if you have more questions?**

If you have concerns or questions, call and ask for Sexual Health, or visit the health unit website below.



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DIAPHRAGM

