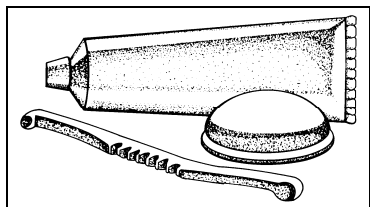


## THE DIAPHRAGM



### What is it?

The diaphragm is a barrier method of birth control, meaning it is used to stop the sperm from

meeting the egg. It is a soft, thin, latex dome with a flexible rim. It is placed high in the vagina and covers the cervix. The fit is not tight enough to prevent all of the sperm from getting past the diaphragm, so it must be used with a spermicide (contraceptive gel). You need to see a doctor to be measured for the right size and then you will be given a prescription to buy the diaphragm at a pharmacy.

### How effective is it?

The diaphragm is about 84-94% effective depending on how well it is used and how well it fits. Most diaphragms will last up to two years. Diaphragm size may need to be changed if you have a pregnancy, abortion, lower pelvic surgery, lost or gained ten pounds or more. Using condoms with the diaphragm gives better protection against pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

### How is it used?

There should be no contact between the vagina and penis before the diaphragm is put in as there may be sperm in the pre-ejaculate

- Wash your hands.
- Put about one tablespoon of contraceptive gel in the diaphragm and around the rim.
- Squeeze the sides of the rim together with the dome side down.
- Squat or place one leg on a stool or toilet seat. Open the vagina as you would to use a tampon, and insert the diaphragm. Push it along the floor of the vagina as far as it will go. Tuck the front rim of the diaphragm up along the roof of your vagina behind the public bone. The contraceptive gel should be against your cervix.

You can get a plastic inserter to help put the diaphragm in place. When the diaphragm is in the right place, you and your male partner should not feel it.

The diaphragm can be inserted up to six hours before sex, but if it has been in place for more than two hours, you must insert an extra application of spermicidal gel or foam. If you have sex more than once, you must also use more of the spermicide. You do not need to take the diaphragm out to add more foam or gel.

The diaphragm must remain in place for six to eight hours after sex (but no longer than 24 hours in total).

### To remove a diaphragm:

- Wash your hands.
- Hook a finger or the inserter under the rim and pull it down and out.
- Wash it with mild soap and water.
- Hold it up to the light to look for any holes, cracks or tears.
- Store it in a cool, dry place.

If at any time you think that the diaphragm may have moved or if you forgot to use more spermicidal gel, speak to a healthcare professional about taking the emergency contraceptive pill.

### Possible side effects and complications

- Some people are sensitive or allergic to the latex in the diaphragm or the spermicide.
- Some women have more bladder infections or yeast infections with the diaphragm.
- Certain positions during sex can cause the diaphragm to move out of place.
- Toxic shock syndrome (a rare infection) is a risk if the diaphragm is left in place too long (more than 24 hours).

Women should not use a diaphragm if:

- the vagina/uterus prevents a proper fit of the diaphragm
- there is a personal history of toxic shock syndrome
- they have a lot of vaginal infections or infections that won't get better
- they are not comfortable inserting or removing the diaphragm.

Condom use is necessary to help prevent the spread of STIs, HIV and hepatitis B.

**For more information, call Peel Public Health 905-799-7700 and ask for Sexual Health Information**

or visit

**[intheknowpeel.ca](http://intheknowpeel.ca)   [peelsexualhealth.ca](http://peelsexualhealth.ca)   [peelregion.ca/health](http://peelregion.ca/health)**