



THE DIAPHRAGM



The diaphragm, like the male or female condom, is a barrier method of contraception and prevents pregnancy by preventing sperm from reaching the egg. The diaphragm is a ring shaped device that fits inside the vagina and covers the cervix.

Diaphragms must be fitted to the individual patient. This will be done at a clinic visit. The fit of your diaphragm may change and should be checked if you gain or lose a significant amount of weight, following pregnancy, or pelvic surgery.

Because the diaphragm must be used with each episode of intercourse, it is imperative that you are comfortable inserting and removing your diaphragm and that you understand its proper placement. The technique is as follows:

1. Empty your bladder and wash your hands whenever you insert or remove your diaphragm.
2. Apply approximately one tablespoon of spermicidal cream or jelly or one vaginal film insert into the dome of the diaphragm and spread around the dome; cream or jelly need not be spread on the rim or the outside of the diaphragm.
3. Fold the diaphragm in half and insert into the vagina like a tampon.
4. Check with your index finger to make sure the rim of the diaphragm is at the pubic arch and that the cervix is covered.
5. Hook your finger around the rim to remove the diaphragm at the proper time.

The proper use of the diaphragm requires the combined use of a contraceptive jelly or cream type spermicide to the center and rim of the device. The diaphragm must be inserted prior to intercourse. It may be inserted up to one hour before intercourse, and must be left in place for six to eight hours afterward. It is then removed, washed with soap and water and stored in a case at room temperature. If you have more than one episode of intercourse during the six to eight hour waiting time, additional spermicide should be applied without removing the diaphragm.

The failure rate with the use of the diaphragm is about 2-3%. Failure with the diaphragm is usually the result of improper placement or because the diaphragm is not used. There are other potential risks with the use of the diaphragm. Women who use diaphragms are about twice as likely to have urinary tract infections, and some women have an increased number of vaginal infections.

Use of the diaphragm when combined with a spermicide reduces the risk of transmission of becoming infected with a sexually transmitted disease such as gonorrhea. In addition, it may reduce the risk of HIV infection.