

## Diaphragm

This handout will tell you about diaphragms and how to use one. If you have questions or concerns, please call your clinic.

### Diaphragm

A diaphragm is a form of birth control. It is a thin silicone or latex dome and has a flexible ring around the outer edge. You must add in spermicidal (sperm-killing) cream or jelly to the diaphragm every time you use it. It holds spermicide close to your cervix to keep sperm out of your uterus. If you are unsure what spermicide to use, please ask your health care provider or pharmacist.

### Choosing a Diaphragm

Diaphragms come in many sizes. Your health care provider must fit you for your diaphragm. You will need to know how to correctly put in and take out the diaphragm before you go home.

### Inserting Your Diaphragm

You must use the diaphragm each time you have sex. To use the diaphragm:

1. Hold it up to a light and look for tiny cracks, holes, or breaks.
2. Apply about 1 tablespoon (about the size of a quarter) of spermicide to the inside center of your diaphragm.
3. Use your finger to spread more spermicide around the rim. This will help form a seal against the cervix.
4. Put the diaphragm in the vagina as directed.

### Getting a Proper Fit

The diaphragm covers your cervix. It tucks behind your pubic bone. You should be able to feel your cervix through the diaphragm. A poor fit can cause the diaphragm to slip out of place. This can cause discomfort and increase the risk of getting pregnant.

### Using Your Diaphragm

**After 6 hours:** Use an applicator to insert more spermicide in the vagina if you have not had sex after 6 hours. You should leave your diaphragm in to do this.

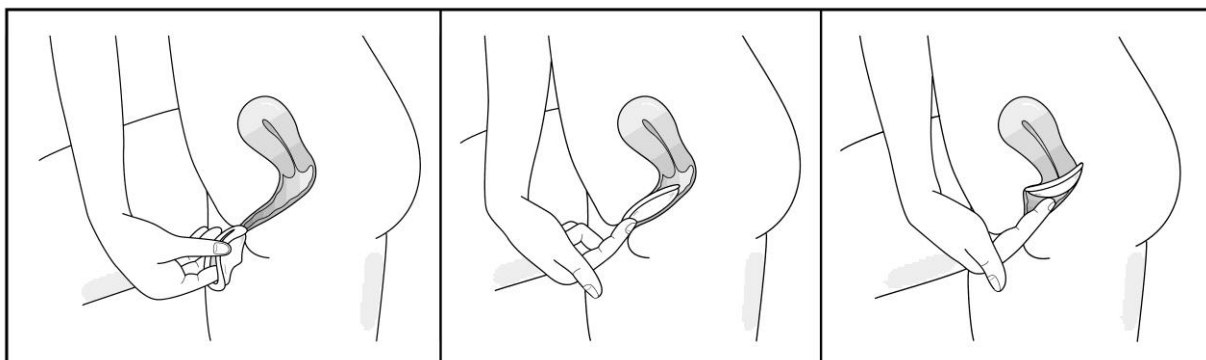
**After sex:** Keep your diaphragm in place for at least 6 hours to keep the sperm blocked from entering the uterus. It also allows for the spermicide to work. **Do not** douche during this time, as it will wash away the spermicide.

### Reusing Your Diaphragm

You can leave your diaphragm in place if you want to have sex again. You can leave it in place for up to 24 hours. It should not get in the way of your normal routines. If you have sex more than once there are some guidelines you need to follow for safe use.

**Adding spermicide:** Before each time you have sex, you will need to add another dose of spermicide.

**Checking the position:** Before each time you have sex, check to make sure your diaphragm is still in the correct place.



**Emergency contraception:** If you notice that your diaphragm has slipped out of place and you have had sex, call your clinic right away. You may be able to take emergency contraception. You need to take it as soon as you can to decrease your chance of getting pregnant.

**Waiting to take it out:** Wait 6 hours before you take out the diaphragm. Always start counting 6 hours from the last time you had sex before taking it out.

### **Effectiveness**

The effectiveness of the diaphragm depends on how you use it. It works best to prevent pregnancy when it is always used correctly and used every time you have sex.

**Perfect use:** If you use the diaphragm as instructed every time you have sex, the failure rate is very low. With perfect use, about 6 out of 100 women will get pregnant in the first year of use.

**Typical use:** With typical use, you may not use the diaphragm correctly or use it every time you have sex. Because of this, the actual failure rate is about 20%. This means that 20 out of 100 women will become pregnant in the first year.

### **Care of Your Diaphragm**

After use, you need to wash your diaphragm with mild soap and water. Pat it dry. You may dust it with cornstarch to absorb any extra moisture or leave it to air dry in your open case. This will keep the silicone or latex from breaking down. You will want to hold it up to a light and look for tiny cracks, holes, or breaks. Always store it in its case to protect it.

### **Products to Avoid**

There are some products you should avoid using with your diaphragm. The products listed below can harm the silicone or latex, causing it to break down.

- Over-the-counter and prescription vaginal creams such as Monistat<sup>®</sup>, Vagisil<sup>®</sup>, Gyne-Lotrimin<sup>®</sup>, Terazol<sup>®</sup>, Metro-Gel<sup>®</sup>, Premarin<sup>®</sup> or Estrace<sup>®</sup>
- Petroleum jelly
- Perfume
- Talcum powder
- Mineral Oil
- Cocoa Butter
- Cold cream
- Hand lotion
- Vegetable oil

You may use water-soluble lubricants if needed.

### **Replacing the Diaphragm**

You will need to be re-fitted for a new diaphragm:

- If you gain or lose over 10 pounds.
- If you have a baby.
- If it becomes torn or damaged.
- Every 2 years.

### **Insurance Coverage**

A diaphragm may or may not be covered by your insurance. Spermicidal cream or jelly must be used with the diaphragm. You can buy these over-the-counter without a prescription.

### **When to Call**

- Unusual vaginal discharge
- Odor
- Itching
- Urgent, frequent, or burning urination

**Who to Call**

20 S. Park St. Clinic\*  
20 S. Park St., Suite 307  
20 S. Park St., Suite 506  
Madison, WI 53715  
**(608) 287-2830**

Ob-Gyn Resident Physician Clinic  
20 S. Park St.  
Madison, WI 53715  
**(608) 287-2830**

Union Corners Clinic\*  
2402 Winnebago St.  
Madison, WI 53704  
**(608) 242-6840**

UW Health Junction Rd Medical Center\*  
451 Junction Rd.  
Madison, WI 53717  
**(608) 265-7601**

\*Location includes Midwifery Clinic

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If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 11/2021 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4225