



Cervical Cap



Community and Health
Services Department

What is the cap?

The cervical cap is a thimble shaped cap made of latex rubber that fits over the cervix (the opening to the uterus). It is a barrier method of birth control and must be used with spermicide cream or jelly. Condoms should also be used with this method of birth control.

How does the cap work?

- the cervical cap fits snugly over the cervix and helps to prevent sperm from entering the cervix
- the spermicidal cream or jelly kills sperm **on contact**
- the cap can be inserted up to six hours before intercourse and left in place for at least eight hours afterwards

How effective is the cap?

The cervical cap is 86 percent effective in preventing pregnancy in women who have never had children and 71 percent effective in women who have had children.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the cervical cap?

Advantages

- you can leave it in place for up to 48 hours
- it is a reversible form of birth control
- it does not cause any change in your body
- it provides some protection against bacterial sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- you use it only when you need it
- you or your partner cannot feel it
- you do not need to interrupt sex to put it on
- you do not need to involve your partner
- it needs to be replaced every one to two years

Disadvantages

- spermicidal cream may cause irritation
- women with latex allergy or rubber sensitivity cannot use the cap
- you need to feel comfortable inserting the cap into the vagina
- it must be fitted by a skilled clinician
- it does not protect you against viral STIs, such as hepatitis, herpes, human papillomavirus (HPV) and HIV
- it needs to be cleaned after each use
- it carries a high risk of toxic shock syndrome
- it cannot be used during your period
- it needs to be refitted if you gain or lose more than 10 lbs, or after pregnancy, miscarriage or abortion

November 2008

If you have any questions, please call York Region *Health Connection* at **1-800-361-5653**
or visit **www.york.ca/sexualhealth**

You may not be able to use the cervical cap if:

- you or your partner have allergies or sensitivities to latex, rubber or spermicide
- you have structural abnormalities of the vagina or cervix
- you have abnormal pap test (cervical cytology) results
- you have trouble inserting the cap properly
- you have chronic inflammation of the cervix or recurrent infection in the fallopian tubes
- you currently have a vaginal infection
- your weight goes up and down

How to use the cap:

1. Fill the cap 1/3 full of spermicide (too much can interfere with gripping).
2. Separate the labia (lips of vagina) with one hand.
3. Squeeze the rim of the cap together with thumb and index finger of one hand and insert the cap into the vagina. Push it as far back as it will go.
4. Use your index finger to press the rim around the cervix. Press on the dome to create suction and adjust the cap to make sure the cervix is completely covered.
5. Insert the cervical cap up to six hours prior to intercourse and leave it in place for eight hours after the last act of intercourse.
6. To remove the cap, tilt the cap to one side with your index finger and hook your middle finger under the rim. Then pull the cap outward and downward to remove.
7. Wash the cap with mild soap and warm water, pat dry and dust with cornstarch if desired.
8. Check for holes after each use by holding the cap up to the light.
9. If lubricant is required, use a water-based product. Do not use the cap with oil based products such as petroleum jelly (Vaseline).

Important Notes:

- **If the cap is dislodged during or soon after intercourse, go to your physician or walk-in clinic to discuss if emergency contraception is required.**
- **Always use a condom with the cervical cap.**

