

Contraceptive Sponge

What is the contraceptive sponge?

The contraceptive sponge is a single-use vaginal spermicide. It is a soft, disposable, polyurethane foam device containing spermicide. The sponge is made in one size and is available over-the-counter. It has a nylon loop attached to the bottom for removal.

How it works

- The contraceptive sponge is placed at the cervix and blocks sperm from entering the uterus.
- The sponge continuously releases a spermicide that keeps sperm from moving.
- It is effective for up to 12 hours.

Effectiveness

With typical use the contraceptive sponge is 68 per cent effective. Effectiveness increases to 98 per cent when used in combination with the male condom.

You may not be able to use the contraceptive sponge if you:

- Are allergic to sulpha drugs, polyurethane or spermicide
- Have trouble inserting the sponge properly
- Have structural abnormalities of the vagina or cervix
- Have a reproductive tract infection
- Have recently had a baby abortion or miscarriage
- Have a history of toxic shock syndrome

The contraceptive sponge must not be used when you have vaginal bleeding, including your period, as it can increase your risk of toxic shock syndrome.

Recent studies show a potential increase in the spread of HIV with frequent spermicide use. This is likely due to irritation of the vaginal or penile tissues, making it easier for the HIV virus to enter your body.

Advantages

- The contraceptive sponge is a barrier method and spermicide in one.
- With 12 hours protection, you won't have to change the sponge if sex is repeated during this time.
- It does not require a prescription.
- It can be used while breastfeeding.
- A woman does not need a partner to participate in contraception.
- The contraceptive sponge does not contain hormones.



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Disadvantages

- You need to feel comfortable inserting the sponge into your vagina.
- The contraceptive sponge may cause vaginal irritation.
- Sex may be messy as the sponge requires liquid.
- If left in the vagina longer than the recommended time, symptoms of toxic shock syndrome may occur.

Instructions for use

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Wet the sponge with at least two tablespoons of clean water.
3. The spermicide will become active when the sponge is thoroughly wet.
4. Insert the sponge deep into the vagina. Slide your finger around the edge of the sponge and check to ensure it is covering the cervix.
5. The sponge can be inserted up to 24 hours before intercourse. It must be left in place for at least six hours after the last time you have intercourse. Do not leave in for more than 30 hours in a row.
6. To remove the sponge, put finger through the loop of the sponge and slowly pull out.
7. Always discard a used sponge in the garbage. Do not flush down the toilet.

The contraceptive sponge does not protect you from sexually transmitted infections. Always use a condom from beginning to end of all sexual contact to reduce your risk.



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