

FACTS ABOUT SPERMICIDES

(Foam, Jelly, Tablet, Cream, Suppositories and Film)

What is a spermicide and how does it work?

Spermicides are birth control chemicals that prevent pregnancy by killing sperm. Spermicides are available as a cream, foam, jelly, suppository or film.

How do I use it?

Spermicide (in any form) is placed deeply inside the vagina and works by killing sperm before it reaches an egg. Instructions are different for each type of spermicide, so read the label carefully before use. Some types of spermicide (like tablets and films) should be in place at least 10 to 15 minutes before you have sex, to allow them to dissolve and become more effective.

How effective are spermicides?

The risk of getting pregnant is lower if you use spermicide correctly and every time you have sex. It will prevent pregnancy about 72% of the time. If you use spermicide with a condom, you can prevent pregnancy about 97% of the time.

Will I have any problems if I use spermicides?

- Some women may experience irritation, allergic reactions, or urinary tract infections.
- Spermicides might not work as well if you are also using medication for a vaginal yeast infection.
- Spermicides that contain nonoxynol-9 (usually called N-9) can cause skin irritation and make you more likely to get HIV if your partner has HIV.

How do you use a spermicide?

FOAM:

1. Shake can 20 times.
2. Fill the tube and lie down.
3. Put the tube in your vagina (birth canal) as far as it will go and then push the plunger. This puts the foam at the cervix (opening of the uterus).
4. Use a new tube of foam each time you have sex or if it has been over one hour since you put the foam inside your vagina.

CREAM/JELLY: Follow instructions 2 - 4 as listed under foam. You do not have to shake the tube.

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FILM:

1. Put one thin sheet of film deep in your vagina (birth canal).
2. Wait 10 minutes for it to melt.
3. Use a new piece of film each time you have sex or if it has been more than one hour since you put a sheet of film inside your vagina.

SUPPOSITORY/TABLET:

1. Push the suppository deep into your vagina (birth canal).
2. Wait 10 minutes before you have sex. This gives the suppository/tablet time to melt.

Where can I get spermicides?

You do not need a prescription to buy spermicide. Spermicides can be purchased at pharmacies, some grocery stores or you can get them at the health department.

REMEMBER:

- Spermicide alone is one of the least effective forms of contraception against pregnancy.
- Spermicides **do not** protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Protect yourself; use a latex or vinyl condom every time you have oral, vaginal or anal sex.
- With any type of spermicide, **don't insert it more than one hour (60 minutes) before** having sex.
- Spermicide should remain in the vagina at least six hours after sex.
- Do not rinse or douche the vagina for at least six hours after sex.
- You should insert another application of spermicide EVERY time you have sex.
- **Always read the instructions and follow them carefully!**