

Vaginal Spermicides

What are vaginal spermicides?

Vaginal spermicides are put in the vagina before sex to help prevent pregnancy. They contain an ingredient called nonoxynol-9 that kills sperm.

In Canada, spermicides come as film or foam. Spermicidal gel is not available. Spermicides are considered to be among the least effective of all birth control methods.

Lactic acid buffering gel is available in Canada. However, it's not as effective as nonoxynol-9. Lactic acid buffering gel is different than the spermicides described in this handout.

How well do vaginal spermicides work?

- If **no method** of birth control is used, there's about an **85%** chance of getting pregnant after 1 year of having sex.
- With **perfect use** (you follow the exact directions all the time) vaginal spermicides are **82%** effective.
- With **typical use** (not following the exact directions) vaginal spermicides are **72%** effective.
- They have a high failure rate. Think about getting **emergency contraception** if:
 - you didn't use the spermicide correctly or with a barrier method.
 - pregnancy would be hard for you.
- Spermicides don't protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or HIV.
- Use a condom **every time** you have sex (anal, oral, vaginal) to lower your risk of STIs and HIV.

How do I use vaginal spermicides?

- Read and follow the package instructions.
- Check the expiry date on the package. Don't use expired products.
- Use the right amount of spermicide.
- Put the spermicide up high in the vagina to cover the cervix.
- Wait the recommended time between putting it in and having sex.
- You have to put spermicide in **each time** you have sex.
- When using with a diaphragm or cervical cap, keep in place for **at least 6 hours** after sex.

What are the benefits of vaginal spermicides?

- You don't need a prescription.
- Spermicides don't contain hormones.

What are the disadvantages of spermicides?

Vaginal spermicides may:

- irritate you or your partner (s) genitals (e.g., itchiness, redness, or pain)
- increase the risk of HIV for people who are at high risk
- increase the risk of bladder or vaginal infections
- be messy to use

Did You Know

- You have the right to make the decision to have sex or not.
- You can plan ahead and talk to your partner(s) about how to lower your risk of pregnancy, STIs, and HIV.
- You can consider getting regular testing for STIs and HIV. Talk to your health care provider.
- Many clinics offer low or no cost birth control.

To find a clinic near you visit **ahs.ca/srh**

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at **811**.

Websites

- ahs.ca/srh
- ReadyOrNotAlberta.ca
- teachingsexualhealth.ca
- myhealth.alberta.ca
- sexandu.ca

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