your guide to
diaphragms and caps

Helping you choose the method of contraception that is best for you.
Diaphragms and caps are barrier methods of contraception. They fit inside your vagina, covering your cervix to block the sperm. They come in different shapes and sizes. Typical diaphragms are elastic discs made of thin, soft material, or silicone with a flexible rim. Cervical caps are smaller and are made of latex or silicone. To be effective, both the diaphragm and cap need to be used with spermicide. Spermicides are chemicals that kill sperm.

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How effective are diaphragms and caps?

How effective my contraceptive it depends on how old you are, how often you have sex and whether you follow the instructions.

100 sexually active women don't use my contraception. 80 to 90 will become pregnant in a year. If used according to instructions, both diaphragms and caps are 92-93% effective when used with spermicide. This means that between 8 and 9 women in 100 will get pregnant in a year. The silicone cap FemCap is less effective. If they are not used according to instructions more women will get pregnant.

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How does a diaphragm or cap work?
A diaphragm or cap stops sperm reaching an egg. It covers your cervix while the spermicide kills any sperm to be more effective at preventing a pregnancy. You must use spermicide with both a diaphragm or cap (see page 6).

Can anything make a diaphragm or cap less effective?
A diaphragm or cap will be less effective if:
1. you don’t use it every time you have sex
2. it doesn’t cover your cervix
3. you don’t have the right size
4. you use it without spermicide
5. you have sex three hours or more after you put it in and you didn’t use spermicide
6. you don’t use enough spermicide with your diaphragm or cap every time you have regular sex
7. you remove it too soon (i.e., five or more days after the last time you had sex)
8. you use oil-based products such as baby lotion, bath oil or some vaginal preparations (pessaries) with latex diaphragm or cap. These can damage the latex.

If any of these happen or if you have had sex without using contraception, you can get advice about emergency contraception (see page 11).

What are the different types of diaphragm and cap?
There are three types of latex vaginal diaphragms: flat roll, or NYT type. There are two-silicone diaphragms – a roll and a winged type. All come in a different size.
There are two main types of intrauterine contraceptive devices (IUDs) and aren't. There are currently two types of barrier contraception. A female doctor can help you decide which is best for you after they have examined you.

**What are the advantages of a diaphragm or cap?**

- You only have to use it when you have sex.
- It has no serious side effects.
- You are in control of your contraception.
- There is a choice of different types.
- You can put it in at any convenient time before you have sex.
- It also gives some protection against cervical cancer.

**What are the disadvantages of a diaphragm or cap?**

- Putting it in often can be an irritation.
- Some people find the spermicide cause.
- It can take time to learn how to use it.
- Cramps can cause a problem for some women who use a diaphragm. Ask the doctor if a rise in blood test that can occur in women who use diaphragm if you suffer from cramps. In some cases, a slightly smaller or less constant diaphragm or cap may help.
- Some people are sensitive to the chemicals in the latex on the diaphragm. This may cause irritation in some women and their partners.
Can anyone use a diaphragm or cap?

Most women can use a diaphragm or cap. A diaphragm or cap may not be suitable if you:

- have vaginal muscles which can't hold a diaphragm
- have a cervix of unusual shape or in an awkward position or if you cannot reach it
- are sensitive to the chemicals in latex or spermicides
- have repeated urinary infections
- have a vaginal infection (even until after the infection has cleared)
- have ever had toxic shock syndrome
- do not feel confident in placing your vaginas

If you have a high risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection (STI), for example if you or your partner has more than one partner, it may be advisable not to use a diaphragm or cap. A doctor or nurse that specialize in STIs (Sexual Health) will be able to advise you on the best contraceptive method for you.

Where can I get a diaphragm or cap?

You can get a diaphragm or cap from local family planning clinics or general practices. If you prefer to buy your own, you can buy them from a pharmacy.

How do I put a diaphragm in?

Instructions on how to use a diaphragm come with it. A doctor or nurse will show you how to test it. The different types of diaphragms are all used in a similar way. With clean hands, put a small amount of spermicide onto a side of each diaphragm.
Dip your index finger into the spermicide and apply it to the tip of the cap.

Slide the cap onto your index finger and squeeze it between your fingers and other fingers.

Insert the cap into the vagina using your index finger. It should feel like a tight fit.

Always wear a cap after sex and reapply it the next time you have sex.

How do I put a cap in?

Instructions on how to use a cap come with it. The different types of cap are all used in the same way. The cap should be placed on the cervix and the neck of the uterus. If you have a complaint, you may need to find another cap that is easier for you.