

For further information or to book an appointment:

For youth ages 13-29 - Planned Parenthood Toronto Health Services

Offers drop-in and scheduled appointments
Call 416-961-0113 or visit www.ppt.on.ca.

Teen Health Source

Offers anonymous and confidential sexual health information for teens by teens.
MSN chat TeenHealthSource@hotmail.com, email TeenHealthSource@ppt.on.ca,
call 416-961-3200 or visit www.TeenHealthSource.com.

For women - Bay Centre for Birth Control

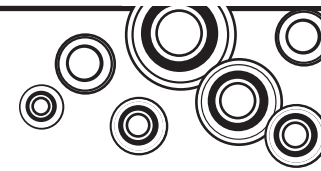
Offers drop-in and scheduled appointments
Call 416-351-3700

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Birth Control Options Series



The Sponge

What is the sponge?

- The sponge is a disposable, circular sponge made of a soft polyurethane foam that you put inside your vagina*. The sponge contains a spermicide called nonoxynol-9. Spermicide is a chemical that kills sperm when it comes in contact with it.

How does the sponge prevent pregnancy?

- In order to get pregnant, sperm must fertilize an egg that has been released. The sponge covers over the cervix (the entrance to the uterus), preventing sperm from getting inside and reaching an egg.
- The spermicide in the sponge kills sperm.

How effective is the sponge?

- The sponge is 90% effective. This means that if 100 people used the sponge correctly for one year, only ten people would get pregnant.
- Because the sponge may be used incorrectly, it is closer to 84% effective with typical use.
- If you have given birth, the sponge is less effective.
- If you have vaginal sex (intercourse) after the sponge has been in for more than 24 hours, you are not protected from pregnancy.

*if you use different terms to describe these parts of your body, please tell your clinician.

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How do you use the sponge?

- You may want to practice finding your cervix before you put the sponge in. The cervix is located at the top of your vagina and should feel like the tip of your nose.
- Rinse the sponge under water. Squeeze it until you can see suds forming on the sponge.
- Get into a comfortable position to insert the sponge. You may want to squat, put a foot up on a chair, or lie on your back.
- With the ribbon loop side facing down, fold 2 of the sponge's sides together.
- Insert the sponge deep into the vagina. Then use one or 2 fingers to push the sponge over your cervix. You should not feel the sponge once it has been inserted.
- To remove the sponge, reach into your vagina with a finger and pull on the sponge's ribbon loop.
- There is no risk of the sponge getting lost in your vagina. If you have troubles reaching it with your fingers, try squatting to bring it closer to your vaginal opening or asking your partner to remove it.
- If you have a physical disability, you may need a partner or support person to help you insert and remove the sponge.

How to start using the sponge

- You do not need a prescription to buy the sponge. It is currently only for sale in Ontario at Shoppers Drug Mart.
- The sponge works immediately after you insert it.
- For up to 24 hours, it protects you from pregnancy even with multiple acts of vaginal sex (do not take the sponge out between acts).
- Leave the sponge in place for 6 hours after your last act of vaginal sex.
- Do not leave the sponge in place for more than 30 hours total.
- You can insert the sponge well before you plan to have sex but see the time guidelines above to make sure the sponge is effective.

What are the side effects of the sponge?

- The sponge can irritate your vagina or your partner(s) penis, causing burning or itching.
- The sponge can also lead to vaginal infections like yeast or bacterial vaginosis (BV), especially if it's left in for too long.
- The sponge can increase your risk of urinary tract infections (UTIs).
- In rare cases, the sponge can cause an allergic reaction.
- In extremely rare instances, the sponge can cause Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS).

Advantages of the sponge

- You don't need a prescription to buy it.
- You only have to use this method when you have sex.
- You are protected for multiple acts of vaginal sex within a 24 hour period, and you don't have to add new spermicide for each act.
- It doesn't affect your ability to get pregnant in the future.
- Your partner(s) doesn't have to be involved.
- People who can't or do not want to take hormonal birth control can use this method.

Disadvantages of the sponge

- You have to do something before you have sex.
- You have to remember to leave it in for 6 hours after the last act of vaginal sex before you can take it out. This may mean you have to wake up in the night to take the sponge out on time.
- You could forget to take it out.
- You or your partner(s) could experience side effects.
- You have to be comfortable touching the inside of your vagina.
- It can be expensive.
- It is currently only for sale in Ontario at Shoppers Drug Mart.
- It is not as effective if you have given birth.