
▶ **What are spermicides?**

Spermicides prevent pregnancy by killing sperm before they can reach an egg.

Spermicides are inserted into the female vagina.

Spermicides are available in several forms: foams, creams, jellies, suppositories, films and sponges.

▶ **How are spermicides used?**

- **Spermicidal creams and jellies** are put directly into your vagina with a special applicator
- **Contraceptive foam** comes in a small can with a plunger-type applicator and is put in the same way as many of the creams and jellies.
- **Suppositories/tablets** are small waxy inserts which you put into your vagina with your finger or with an applicator.
- **Contraceptive film** is a thin square placed in the vagina before sex. It will dissolve releasing the spermicide.
- **The 'sponge'** is made of soft foam that contains spermicide and is inserted into the vagina close to the cervix. During sex, compression of the sponge releases spermicide and the sponge also acts as a barrier to sperm.

▶ **How effective are spermicides?**

When used properly, spermicides can help to prevent pregnancy.

They have a high failure rate when used alone, but can increase protection when used with another method such as a condom or diaphragm.

▶ **What are the advantages of using spermicides?**

Spermicides are:

- available at pharmacies without a prescription
- safe to use for breast feeding women
- useful with other birth control methods
- easy to insert and can be used inside a condom if the partner is sensitive to the chemicals.

▶ **What are the disadvantages of using spermicides?**

Spermicides:

- MUST be applied and reapplied for each act of intercourse.
- are not effective against STIs and have a high failure rate when used alone
- may have an odour or unpleasant taste
- may cause irritation to your partner
- can irritate your skin when used frequently and thus increase the risk of HIV and STI transmission
- can be messy to use

▶ **What else do I need to know?**

It is important to read and follow the directions on the package to find out:

- How soon before sex to use the spermicide
 - How long it is effective after inserting
 - How long to leave it in after sex
- If you can have sex more than once before reapplying

Do not wash the spermicide away for 6 to 8 hours after sex.

Spermicides have no known effect on breast milk production.

▶ **Who can you talk to if you have more questions?**

If you have concerns or questions, call and ask for Sexual Health, or visit the health unit website below.



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DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

Tel: 705-721-7520
Toll free: 1-877-721-7520
www.simcoemuskokahealth.org

▶ **Resources:**

[Canadian Federation for Sexual Health](#)
[Planned Parenthood](#)
[Sexuality and U](#)

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