

Where can you get the sponge?

The Today® sponge is available without a prescription at a variety of locations: drug stores, public health department clinics and Planned Parenthood. It can also be ordered on-line; type 'Today Sponge' into any search engine (e.g., Google).

Sponge

How the sponge works

The Today® sponge is a small, one-size, disposable (single use), over-the-counter method of birth control for women. It contains spermicide (a substance that kills sperm) to prevent pregnancy.

The sponge is inserted into the vagina, placed in front of the cervix, as a barrier that keeps sperm from entering the uterus.

The smooth side of the sponge has a woven loop of polyester fabric that provides easy removal of the sponge.

How to use the sponge

- Wash your hands.
- Remove the sponge from its package and moisten the sponge with tap water just before inserting it into the vagina. Gently squeeze to produce “suds” that will activate the spermicide and help with insertion.
- Slide the sponge into the vagina along the back wall of the vagina until it rests against the cervix. The dimple side should be up against the cervix, with the loop away from the cervix.
- Insert your finger into your vagina to check that it is in place.



- The sponge is effective immediately for up to 24 hours, with one or multiple acts of intercourse and no need to add more spermicide.
- After intercourse, the sponge must be left in place for at least six hours before it is removed. Do not leave in place for more than 24-30 hours.
- To remove the sponge, grasp the loop on the sponge with one finger and gently pull.
- Check to be sure the sponge is in one piece; if it is torn, remove all pieces.
- Throw the sponge away (don't flush it!).

Effectiveness

The sponge is in the Tier 3 level of contraceptive effectiveness because preventing pregnancy depends on using the sponge each time of sexual intercourse. Typically, for women who have experienced childbirth, 24 women out of 100 are likely to get pregnant within 1 year of use. Typically, for women who have not experienced childbirth, 12 women out of 100 are likely to get pregnant within 1 year of use.

If the sponge is not used every time or it slips out of place, the chance of pregnancy goes up.

To increase effectiveness, use the sponge consistently and correctly according to the package instructions.

Benefits of the sponge

The sponge is an over-the-counter method and is available without a prescription. The sponge may be inserted many hours before sexual intercourse and may be left in place for up to 24 hours.

GENERAL REFERENCE: Contraceptive Technology (CT): 20th Rev. Ed., 2011 and CT Update (monthly newsletter).

Compared with the other vaginal barrier methods, the sponge may be more comfortable for some women. Using a sponge does not require the direct involvement of the male partner and does not interrupt sex.

Potential side effects or disadvantages

Some people are allergic to the spermicide in the sponge. Some women who use the sponge report an increase of yeast infections. Planning ahead is required and you must be comfortable with inserting and removing the sponge. Consult a health care provider if you and/or your partner are allergic to sulfa drugs.

The sponge offers no protection against HIV (AIDS) or sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as gonorrhea, chlamydia, herpes, genital warts (HPV), hepatitis B and syphilis.

Potential risks

The sponge should not be used during a woman's period, immediately after childbirth, miscarriage, or other termination of pregnancy. The sponge should not be worn for more than 24-30 hours after insertion (including the six hour waiting time after intercourse) because of the possible risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS). It is also not recommended for women who have had TSS symptoms in the past.

Danger signs for TSS

- Sudden high fever
- Vomiting, diarrhea
- Dizziness, faintness, weakness
- Sore throat, aching muscles and joints
- Rash (like a sunburn)