

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 Parenthoods. It can also be ordered on-line at www.birthcontrol.com.

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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 with the dimple side 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.



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- 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.
- 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:

About 9 in 100 women get pregnant (91% effectiveness) if they use the sponge every time they have sex and use it correctly for one year (perfect use). If you don't use the sponge every time you have sex or it slips out of place (typical use), your chance of pregnancy goes up. For women who have experienced childbirth the sponge is less effective (20 pregnancies per 100 women, with perfect use).

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. Compared with the other cervical 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 doctor or 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 (menstruation), immediately after childbirth, miscarriage, or other termination of pregnancy. Wearing the sponge for longer than 30 hours after insertion (including the 6 hour waiting time after intercourse) is not recommended 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)