

VAGINAL SPERMICIDES

Definition

Vaginal spermicides are a form of birth control used in the vagina. They are available from drugstores without a prescription. They come in many different forms—creams, gels, inserts, foams, sponges. All have the same action, that is, they kill sperm or make them inactive so they are unable to pass through the cervix to the egg.

Instructions for Use

- Each of the many types of vaginal spermicides has its own instructions. Follow the package directions carefully, and call your physician if you have any questions.
- Use spermicides before any sexual/genital contact.
- Insert applicator or suppository deep into your vagina as you would a tampon. Suppository brands require waiting 15 minutes before engaging in sexual contact; follow package directions.
- If more than ½ hour passes after application, reapply spermicide and repeat as needed. Spermicides are only effective if you use them before each ejaculation. You must repeat application before repeating sex. This is very important.
- Douching may decrease the effectiveness of this method of contraception. Should you feel the need to douche, wait at least 8 hours after having sex.
- Wait 8 hours before taking a bath.

Benefits

- Spermicides are only 80% reliable in preventing pregnancy; however, when used with a condom, their effectiveness increases to 95%.
- They are a relatively inexpensive form of birth control.
- They are widely available to anyone. They can be bought without a prescription at your local drug or grocery store.
- Vaginal spermicides and condoms used together are the best spontaneous form of birth control available today.

Contraindications

If you are unable to remember to use vaginal spermicides **EVERY** time you have intercourse, then this is not an effective form of birth control for you. It only takes one time to forget and one time to get pregnant.

Allergic reactions are a rare side effect of vaginal spermicides. Stop using them if you develop any of these allergic symptoms, and contact your physician:

- Soreness of the vagina
- Rash in the genital area
- Profuse, foul-smelling, or itchy discharge

Contact Our Office If:

You have any questions or concerns.

Written by David W. Kaplan, M.D., and the staff of the Adolescent Medicine Center The Children's Hospital, Denver, Colorado.