CONTRACEPTIVE FILM, FOAM, & SPONGE FACT SHEET

What is it?
Contraceptive films, foams and sponges are methods of birth control you put into your vagina before you have sex.

These methods of birth control contain a chemical called spermicide. A spermicide helps to prevent pregnancy by killing sperm. The film/foam/sponge creates a barrier between the sperm and the egg which also helps prevent the chance of pregnancy.

How effective is it?
The effectiveness of films/foams/sponges depends on whether these methods are used right every time you have sex. These methods are 72-91% effective in preventing pregnancy depending on how well you use it. To use this method, you need to feel comfortable with putting the film, sponge or applicator (for foam) into your vagina. There should be no contact between the vagina and penis before insertion as there may be sperm in the pre-ejaculate.

Film
The film is a one inch square semi-transparent material containing spermicide. It is folded and then inserted into the vagina prior to sex. The film dissolves and reaches its maximum protection after 15 minutes inside the vagina. Sex needs to happen within 3 hours after insertion. If it is longer than 3 hours, a new film must be inserted.

Foam
Foam is a liquid type of birth control inserted into the vagina using an applicator. Once inserted, the foam starts to work immediately. Sex needs to happen within 1 hour. If it is longer than 1 hour, a new applicator of foam must be inserted.

Sponge
The sponge is made of polyurethane and is put into your vagina prior to sex. To use the sponge, add water to the sponge, squeeze it, and insert it into the vagina. The sponge is more effective if you have never had a baby (91% effective) versus if you have had a baby (82% effective). One sponge can last for 24 hours, even if you have sex multiple times. To remove the sponge, relax your vaginal muscles, locate the loop on the sponge and gently pull. Keep the sponge in for 6 hours after the last time you have sex to ensure the effectiveness of the sponge. Do not keep the sponge in for longer than a total of 30 hours since you first put it in.

Advantages
• Easily available at a pharmacy or drug store and no prescription is needed
• You only use it when you need it
• Convenient to carry with you
• Provides extra lubrication during sex
• Effectiveness can be improved to 98% by using a condom
• Allows women an opportunity to share in the responsibility for pregnancy prevention

Disadvantages
• Should be used with another method of birth control such as condoms to be more effective
• Spermicide may cause burning or irritation of the vagina or penis which may result in pain with urination or with sex

For further information, talk to your health care professional or call Peel Public Health at 905-799-7700.
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- Irritation from the spermicide may increase the chances of becoming infected with a sexually transmitted infection (STI) if you are exposed
- May have a bad taste (if you are also having oral sex)
- Cannot be used if you or your partner(s) are allergic to spermicide
- May be messy
- Used alone, does not protect against STIs

Additional Information
- Be sure to follow the manufacturer’s directions
- If you have any side effects see your health care professional
- Douching is not recommended as it can wash away the spermicide

For More Information
www.vcfcontraceptive.com (Vaginal Contraceptive Film)
www.todaysponge.com (Today Sponge)
www.plannedparenthood.org
www.sexualityandu.ca
www.peelsexualhealth.ca

Remember, use condoms to help prevent the spread of STIs, HIV and Hepatitis B.

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