

What is spermicide?

Spermicide is a chemical that kills sperm. It comes in many forms:

- cream
- foam
- gel
- suppository
- film

Some people use spermicide alone. It can also be combined with other birth control methods to make them more effective.

How effective is spermicide?

If you use spermicide alone, it doesn't prevent pregnancy very well. If always used perfectly, 18 out of 100 women who use this method will get pregnant each year. If used less than perfectly, 29 out of 100 women who use this method will get pregnant each year.

How does it work?

Spermicide prevents pregnancy by killing sperm. This keeps the sperm from joining with an egg.

Important things to remember when using a spermicide:

- The spermicidal cream, foam, gel, suppository or film need to go deep into your vagina near the cervix.
- A plastic applicator is used to insert the cream, foam, gel or suppository. You insert the film with your fingers.
- If you use a suppository or film, wait 10–15 minutes before having sex. This gives it time to dissolve in your vagina. If you don't wait, the spermicide won't work.
- You can insert spermicides up to 1 hour before sex.
- You must add more spermicide each time you have sex.

What are the benefits of using spermicide?

- Spermicides are simple and convenient.
- You can buy spermicides in a store without a prescription.

What are the downsides of using spermicide?

- Spermicides do not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- You must use a spermicide each time you have sex.
- Spermicide is less effective at preventing pregnancy than some other birth control methods.

- Spermicide may increase your risk for vaginal infections.
- Nonoxynol-9 is a common ingredient in spermicides. It can increase the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

Where can I get spermicide?

You can buy spermicides at drugstores, in some supermarkets, and at family planning clinics.

Where can I get more information?

For more information on spermicides, talk to your health care provider.

Compare spermicides to other birth control options using ARHP's Method Match at www.arhp.org/MethodMatch.