

What is the sponge?

The sponge is a method of birth control that you insert into your vagina before sex. The round sponge is made of soft foam and contains spermicide. The bottom of the sponge has a nylon loop that you pull to remove it from your vagina.

How effective is the sponge?

The effectiveness of the sponge depends on:

- Whether you have previously given birth (had a baby)
- If you are using the sponge the right way every time you have sex

Use this chart to determine how effective the sponge may be for you:

	Women who have never given birth	Women who have given birth
Always used correctly	9 out of 100 women will get pregnant each year	20 out of 100 women will get pregnant each year
Not always used correctly	16 out of 100 women will get pregnant each year	32 out of 100 women will get pregnant each year

How does it work?

The sponge covers the cervix to block sperm from entering the uterus. Also, the spermicide in the sponge kills sperm.

Important things to remember when using the sponge:

- Sponges are disposable - each sponge can only be inserted and removed one time.
- To use the sponge, wet it with tap water and squeeze it once to spread out the spermicide. Insert it into your vagina with the dimple side against your cervix.
- The sponge is effective for up to 24 hours after you insert it. You do not need to reinsert a new sponge if you want to have sex more than once in the 24 hour timeframe.
- After the last act of sex, leave the sponge in for at least 6 hours. Do not leave it in for more than 30 hours total.

What are the benefits of using the sponge?

- The sponge is safe, simple, and convenient.
- You can buy the sponge in a store without a prescription.
- You can insert the sponge ahead of time so that sexual activity is not interrupted.

What are the downsides of using the sponge?

- The sponge does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- You can only use each sponge one time.
- The sponge is less effective at preventing pregnancy than some other birth control methods, especially for women who have given birth.
- If the sponge is left in too long, there is a higher risk of a yeast infection and a small risk of toxic shock syndrome.

Where can I get the sponge?

You can buy the sponge at drugstores, in some supermarkets, online, and at family planning clinics.

Where can I get more information?

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

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