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HEALTH.  
YOUR  
CHOICE.**

# Cervical Cap

Talk to your partner about birth control before you have sex. You can use latex condoms to lower your chances of getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and prevent an unwanted pregnancy.

## What is a cervical cap?

The cervical cap is a dome shaped cup that fits tightly over the cervix, and is held in place by suction and the support of the vaginal wall. It is similar to the diaphragm, but it is placed higher in the vagina and is smaller in size. The cervical cap, which is used with spermicidal cream, is inserted before intercourse and must remain in place for 8 hours afterwards. It is measured and fitted by a clinician and should fit comfortably over a woman's cervix.

## How does a cervical cap work?

The cervical cap prevents pregnancy in two ways:

- ★ The cervical cap helps to prevent sperm from entering the uterus.
- ★ The spermicides placed on the cervical cap kills sperm on contact.

## How effective is a cervical cap?

The effectiveness rate of the cervical cap with spermicides varies depending on its use. For those who may not use the cervical cap correctly each time, the effectiveness is 82%. If used perfectly every time the effectiveness is 94%.

## How do you use a cervical cap?

Read the instructions that come with the cervical cap

- ★ Apply approximately 1 teaspoon of spermicidal cream or jelly inside the cervical cap.
- ★ Insert the cervical cap into the vagina so that it covers the cervix; compress the sides of the cap together with the fingers of one hand, and using the index finger as a guide, gently insert the cap as far back in the vagina as it will go. Press on the dome for suction and then adjust the cap to make sure the cervix is covered completely.
- ★ To be most effective, the cervical cap should be inserted less than 2 hours before sexual intercourse and left in place for 8 hours afterward; additional spermicide is not required with each act of intercourse.
- ★ To remove the cervical cap, tilt the cap to the side and hook your finger under the rim; then, lift the cap off the cervix and out of the vagina. Once you have removed the cervical cap, wash the device with warm water and a mild soap; the cervical cap should be patted dry and dusted with baby powder to remove any moisture and placed in its carrying case.
- ★ Check the cervical cap regularly for holes or thin places by holding it up to the light. Most women require a new cap every two years. You may also need a different size after the birth of a baby, after a miscarriage/abortion, pelvic surgery or after a 10 pound weight gain or loss.
- ★ A lubricant can be used with the cervical cap. Avoid oil based lubricants as they may damage the diaphragm.
- ★ Do not use the cap if you are menstruating

**It is important to use condoms or a latex barrier with sexual partners to decrease the risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection.**

## What are the advantages and disadvantages of a cervical cap?

### Advantages

- ★ It is not expensive.
- ★ You only have to use it when you need it.
- ★ You don't feel it. Your partner doesn't feel it.
- ★ You don't have to interrupt sex to put it in.
- ★ Your partner doesn't have to be involved.
- ★ It is a reversible form of birth control and doesn't cause any changes to your body.
- ★ It may reduce the incidence of cervical cancer.
- ★ You usually only need to get a new one every couple of years.
- ★ You can easily carry it with you.

### Disadvantages

- ★ Spermicide contains nonoxynol-9. With frequent use, nonoxynol-9 can irritate the vagina and anus which increases the risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection, including HIV.
- ★ It is not an ideal birth control option for: (a) women with latex allergies or sensitivity to rubber or spermicides, (b) women with physical or neurological impairment, (c) women who are not comfortable with insertion and removal of the device, and/or (d) women with anatomical irregularities of the vagina or cervix
- ★ You cannot use it if you or your partner(s) are allergic to spermicides.
- ★ A skilled clinician must fit it; the cervical cap may not fit all women appropriately
- ★ You should clean it and take care of it each time you use it
- ★ You may have an increased risk of getting Toxic Shock Syndrome; you should return to the clinic in the presence of high fever, diarrhea, vomiting and muscle aches.
- ★ Spermicidal foams, creams and jellies may be messy.
- ★ You cannot use it during your period.
- ★ You're not protected against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

## Where can you get a cervical cap?

You need to go to a clinician to find out the right size of cervical cap for you. However, you don't need a prescription to buy one. In Canada, you can only buy a cervical cap in a few places. You can buy spermicidal jelly/cream at any drug store or birth control clinic.

### If you need further information or would like to book an appointment, call:

Planned Parenthood Toronto Health Services for youth ages 13 to 29. 416-927-7171. Health Services offers same-day, scheduled and drop-in appointments. For more information visit [www.ppt.on.ca](http://www.ppt.on.ca).

Women's Programming at the Bay Centre for Birth Control for women of all ages at 416-351-3700.

Youth can also access information about sexual health by calling the Teen Sex InfoLine at 416-961-3200 or chat live using MSN messenger at [spiderbytes@hotmail.com](mailto:spiderbytes@hotmail.com) from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Monday to Wednesday and 12 noon to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. You can also email us a question anytime at [askus@spiderbytes.ca](mailto:askus@spiderbytes.ca) or visit [www.spiderbytes.ca](http://www.spiderbytes.ca).