

ABCD Family Planning

How to Use “Today” Vaginal Contraceptive Sponge (the sponge)

The sponge protects you from pregnancy as soon as you put it into your vagina in the correct way. Each sponge protects you from pregnancy for 24 hours, no matter how many times you have sex during that 24 hours.

How do you put the sponge into your vagina?

- Check the date on the sponge package. Do not use the sponge if the date on the package is passed or if the package is damaged in any way.
- Wash and dry your hands. Remove the sponge from the package.
- One side of the sponge has a loop, the other side has a small dent, or “dimple”. Hold the sponge with the “dimple” side facing up towards you.
- Wet the sponge well with clean tap water. Squeeze the sponge until it gets very sudsy.
- Fold the sides of the sponge together in towards the dimple, so that the sponge looks long and narrow.
 - ✓ When you look down at the sponge you should see the fold, and the loop should be on the other side.
- Spread the lips of your vagina with one hand and then gently slide the sponge into your vagina with the folded edge first.
- Push the sponge gently down and back in the vagina with one or two fingers. Push it back as far as it will go. The sponge can not go too far or get lost.
 - ✓ Try different positions to see which position makes it easiest for you to put in the sponge:
 - standing with one leg up (for instance, on a stool, chair, or the edge of the tub) or
 - sitting on the edge of a chair with your legs spread apart or
 - lying down with your knees bent and your legs apart or
 - squatting.
- When the sponge is in correctly, it will cover your cervix (opening to the uterus). Check with one finger to be sure the sponge lies flat over the cervix, and that you can feel the loop.

How long do you leave the sponge in your vagina?

- Always wait at least 6 hours from the last time you had sex before you take the sponge out.
- Remove the sponge as soon as you can after 6 hours from the last time you had sex.
 - ✓ Never leave the sponge inside your vagina for more than 30 hours.
- Always remove the sponge right away if you begin your period.
 - ✓ Never use the sponge as a tampon. If you use the sponge when you have your period, you may get Toxic Shock Syndrome, a rare but very serious infection.

How do you take the sponge out of your vagina?

- Put one finger into your vagina and find the loop of the sponge.
 - ✓ If you can't find it right away, bear down like you are having a bowel movement, and try again.
- Hook your finger around the loop and slowly and gently pull the sponge out.
 - ✓ If you can't find the loop, use your thumb and first finger to hold on to the sponge and gently pull it out.
- Do not pull too hard or the sponge might tear or break into pieces inside your vagina.
- Never use anything but your fingers to take out the sponge.

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- Throw the used sponge away in a waste basket. Do not flush the sponge down the toilet.

Important

- Do not douche or use soap in your vagina after taking out the sponge.
- Do not use the same sponge again.

What if you have trouble taking the sponge out?

- Sometimes the sponge is hard to find inside the vagina.
 - ✓ Don't worry, the sponge can not go in too far and it is not lost. Try lying on your back and pull your knees up against your chest, or squat low with your back against the wall. Bear down as if you are having a bowel movement. This makes the vagina shorter and the sponge easier to reach. Find the loop of the sponge, take a few deep breaths, breathe out and pull the sponge gently down and out.
- If you can't find the loop, the sponge may have been put in the vagina upside down or may have flipped over and you won't be able to easily find the loop.
 - ✓ Run your finger along the edge of the sponge and hook it behind the sponge. Find the loop or hold the sponge with your thumb and first finger and pull gently down and out.
- Sometimes the muscles of the vagina tighten making it hard to take out the sponge. Try relaxing the muscles of the vagina in this way: squeeze together the muscles in the vagina for a few seconds, then relax them for 10 seconds, and repeat. When you feel relaxed, try again to find the loop of the sponge. Take a few deep breaths. Breathe out slowly and pull the sponge gently down and out.
- Sometimes the sponge sticks to the cervix. If it doesn't come out easily when you pull it gently, try putting one finger between the sponge and the cervix on one side. Then tilt the sponge away from the cervix and pull the loop gently down and out.

What if the sponge rips while you are taking it out?

- If you see that the sponge is torn when you take it out and think there may be pieces left in your vagina, put one finger inside your vagina all the way to the back and sweep your finger around the cervix to find any pieces.
 - ✓ Call your health care provider right away if you cannot take out the sponge or if you think there may still be a piece of it left inside your vagina.

What if the sponge slips out of your vagina?

Sometimes the sponge comes out on its own during a bowel movement or sneezing.

- **If the sponge slips out of your vagina, and it has been at least 6 hours since the last time you had sex**, you do not need to replace it. If you are planning to have sex again, wet and insert a NEW sponge. Do not use the same sponge that fell out.
- **If the sponge slips out of your vagina, and it has been less than 6 hours since the last time you had sex**, wet and insert a NEW sponge immediately. Leave it in for at least 6 hours after the last time you had sex.
 - ✓ Call the health center and ask about emergency contraception (EC). EC is a type of birth control used by a woman as soon as possible after unprotected sex to prevent pregnancy.
- **If you don't know when the sponge fell out**, you could get pregnant.
 - ✓ If you have EC at home, use it immediately. If you don't have EC at home, call the health center or a pharmacy as soon as possible to get EC.