

# Vaginal Spermicides

## *What are vaginal spermicides?*

- Vaginal spermicides are products containing an ingredient (Nonoxynol 9) that kills sperm on contact.
- Spermicide is inserted into the vagina before sex to help prevent pregnancy.
- Spermicides are available as film, foam, suppositories, cream, and gel.

## *How do vaginal spermicides work?*

- When sperm comes in contact with the vaginal spermicide, the sperm dies and pregnancy cannot occur.

## *How effective are vaginal spermicides?*

- Spermicidal effectiveness rates vary widely. The failure rate can be around 26 per cent.
- Spermicide should be used **with a condom every time you have sex to decrease the risk of pregnancy.**
- Vaginal spermicides may cause vaginal irritation leading to tiny open areas in the vaginal lining. This can increase the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infection (STI) transmission.

**Vaginal spermicides do not offer protection from STI/HIV.**

## *What are the advantages of vaginal spermicides?*

- Vaginal spermicides can be purchased at a pharmacy or grocery store without a prescription.
- Vaginal spermicides provide extra lubrication.
- Women who cannot use a hormonal birth control method have vaginal spermicide options.

## *What are the disadvantages of vaginal spermicides?*

- Vaginal spermicides are messy.
- You have to wait after inserting spermicide before having sex.
- Vaginal spermicides can cause irritation (e.g. itchiness, redness or pain). If this happens you should stop using the spermicide and talk to your health-care provider or birth control clinic.
- Some women may not feel comfortable inserting vaginal spermicide into their vagina.
- Some women experience more frequent urinary tract infections when a spermicide and condom or spermicide and diaphragm are used together.

## *How do I use vaginal spermicide?*

- Vaginal spermicides should not be used alone. Vaginal spermicides should be used with another form of birth control (e.g. condoms).
- Use the correct amount of spermicide. Read and follow package instructions.
- Insert the spermicide high into the vagina to cover the cervix, before sex.
- Insert another spermicide application into the vagina **each** time you have sex.
- Wait the recommended time between insertion and sex.
- Do not rinse or douche your vagina for at least 6 hours after sex.





### *Film*

- Insert at least 15 minutes, but not more than 3 hours, before sex.
- Place the folded film over your dry index finger.
- Push the film into the vagina - at or near the cervix.
- Inserting the film takes practice.



### *Foam*

- Insert foam immediately but not more than 1 hour before sex.
- Shake the foam container vigorously.
- Fill the applicator with foam.
- Insert the applicator into the vagina - at or near the cervix.
- Hold applicator in place and depress plunger.
- Remove applicator.



### *Gel/Cream*

- Used with a diaphragm. Gel or cream should not be used alone.
- Insert 10 to 15 minutes before sex.
- Fill applicator with gel.
- Insert the applicator into the vagina - at or near the cervix.
- Hold applicator in place and depress plunger.
- Remove applicator.

### *Suppository*

- Insert 10 to 15 minutes but less than 1 hour before sex.
- Place the suppository into the vagina - at or near the cervix.

### *Important to remember*

- Check the expiry date – do not use spermicide, film, foam, suppository, cream, or gel that is outdated.

### *Sexual decision making*

Choose to have sex or not - you have the right to make that decision.

Choose to protect yourself from pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection (STI).

**Use a condom every time you have sex to lower your risk of STI.**

Talk with your partner about these choices before you have sex.

### *For more information*

Contact your physician, local community health centre or birth control clinic:

Calgary:	(403) 944-7111
Edmonton:	(780) 735-0010
Fort McMurray:	(780) 791-6263
Grande Prairie:	(780) 513-7551
Lethbridge:	(403) 320-0110
Red Deer:	(403) 346-8336

Or

**Health Link Alberta (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)**

Edmonton, call 408-LINK (5465)

Calgary, call 943-LINK (5465)

**Outside the Edmonton**

**and Calgary local calling areas,**

call toll-free 1-866-408-LINK (5465)

STI/HIV Information Line 1-800-772-2437