

# Family Planning

## Welfare Association of NT Inc.

ABN 38 812 238 738

*Family Planning Welfare Association of the NT Inc exists to provide quality health care and education services in sexual and reproductive health*

## The Diaphragm

### What is it?

The diaphragm is a dome shaped latex rubber object, which is put into the vagina so that it covers the cervix (or neck of the womb). It tucks in behind your pelvic bone.

### How does it work?

It is held in position by the muscles of your pelvis and makes a barrier to stop the sperm from entering the uterus (womb).

### How effective is it?

- When used perfectly the diaphragm is 94% effective at preventing pregnancy
- Unfortunately, with typical use the diaphragm is only 84% effective at preventing pregnancy. The main reason is that *people do not use it correctly and/or do not use it every time they have sexual intercourse.*

### Where do I get a diaphragm?

- It is important that you have the right size and type of diaphragm for you. At Family Planning Clinics either a doctor or a nurse clinician can do this 'diaphragm fitting' for you. At this time, you will be shown how to use and look after your diaphragm. This may require two appointments.
- The diaphragm is for sale at Family Planning Clinics and from some chemists.

### How to use a diaphragm

- The diaphragm is put into the vagina at a convenient time before sexual intercourse
- Squeeze the diaphragm with the fingers on one hand so it is long and thin
- Separate the lips of the vagina with the other hand. Push the diaphragm into place along the back wall of the vagina in a downwards and backwards action. The front rim must be pushed up into position behind the pubic bone.
- Make sure you can feel the cervix (the smooth knob that forms the entrance to the womb) through the latex rubber to know that the diaphragm is in position.
- The diaphragm needs to be left in place for at least six (6) hours after sexual intercourse. It can be worn continuously as long as it is taken out once a day (i.e. every 30 hours) to be washed in non-bleeding women.
- You should avoid use during bleeding.

### How do I remove a diaphragm?

To remove your diaphragm hook your finger behind the front edge of the diaphragm and pull down and out. ***Do not forget - this should be at least 6 hours after you last had sex even if the 24 hours is 'up'.***

### How to look after a diaphragm

- Wash the diaphragm in warm, non perfumed soapy water after you use it. Then rinse it thoroughly, dry it carefully and dust it lightly with corn flour.

- Check the diaphragm for pinholes or tears every time you use it by holding it up to the light.
- In the tropics many women store their diaphragm in the fridge to maintain a constant cool temperature
- Each diaphragm should last 2 years with regular use and if conforms to recommended care

### Diaphragm checkup

- You may need to come back to the clinic one or more weeks after the first fitting with your diaphragm in place, so that its size and position can be checked. Practise putting it in your vagina, using it during intercourse as well as wearing and removing the diaphragm. Wear it for 8 hours to make sure that it stays comfortable.
- Use the trial diaphragm as if you were using it for contraception.
- **Always use another method of contraception until the diaphragm is checked if using a Trial Diaphragm.**

### Do I need to have my diaphragm rechecked after I've bought it?

- **Yes:**
- If you lose or gain 3 kg or more in weight;
- After a pregnancy, miscarriage and/ or a termination of pregnancy;
- If the diaphragm becomes uncomfortable to you or your partner;

### Use of spermicides

There is very little evidence to suggest that the use of spermicide decreases pregnancy rates when used with the diaphragm. Although the manufacturer recommends that it be used, it is difficult to find a supplier in the NT and this should be discussed with your doctor or nurse.

### Possible problems

- It is important to decide before each sexual intercourse to use it every time.
- You will need to feel OK about putting your fingers in your vagina.
- You or your partner might be allergic to latex rubber or spermicide.
- Some women have repeated bladder infections, discomfort or constipation.
- Sometimes it is difficult to get a good fit.

No method of contraception is perfect for every couple. Think about the benefits and problems before making your choice. If you do decide to use the diaphragm, use it correctly. The one time you do not is the time you might get pregnant!

For further information please call client information support service on 8948

0144 or visit [www.fpwnt.com.au](http://www.fpwnt.com.au)

Or call

NT Health Direct 1800 022 222