



A Complete Guide to Diaphragms

The diaphragm is a reusable non-hormonal form of birth control appropriate for couples who follow Jewish law. Leigh Maller, who fits women for diaphragms, has written a guide with everything you need to know about the diaphragm, how to use, its benefits, and the fitting appointment itself.

Family planning and pregnancy prevention are topics that have always been important to women and couples alike. The approach to the subject is not always straightforward, and at times, there are many decisions to be made and many questions to be asked. Whether discussing a woman after back to back pregnancies, a young couple, a woman who has been advised not to get pregnant for medical reasons, the necessity or desire to prevent pregnancy can bring about tumultuous emotions for women and couples.

The decision to prevent pregnancy is personal and sensitive, therefore it is of utmost importance that the professionals meeting with a woman in this stage be aware of the specific situation of the woman or the couple. It is essential to approach each conversation and discussion with understanding, sensitivity, and the tools required to create a safe and supportive environment for the woman so that she may choose the best form of contraception for her.

A couple needs to know that there are many different forms of contraception and that something different may be appropriate for each woman. It is important to learn about the existing options and even consult a health provider before choosing your birth control form. The forms of contraceptive devices that exist today are wide-ranging, different in style, and in the ways in which they work. There are hormonal forms of birth control, such as the pill, vaginal rings, injections, and intrauterine hormonal devices. Additionally, there are different forms of non-hormonal birth control, such as the copper intrauterine device, cervical cap, and diaphragm. Spermicide may be used, as well as many different approaches to ovulation tracking.

What is a diaphragm?

The diaphragm is a form of contraceptive device that may be used per Jewish law. The diaphragm is non-invasive, non-hormonal, and fully controlled by the woman.

The diaphragm is a rubber dome made from latex or silicone. It is surrounded by a hidden spring that blocks the cervix, forming a barrier that does not allow sperm to enter the uterus via the cervix. It is recommended to use spermicide and the diaphragm; spermicide affects the sperm's ability to travel to the cervix and, therefore, increases the diaphragm's effectiveness. The diaphragm may be used with lubricants.

There are various types of diaphragms, the most common being the "regular" (or "classic") diaphragm, available in multiple sizes, and the Caya diaphragm, which is specifically designed to be universal in size.

The History of The Diaphragm

Pregnancy prevention via physical obstruction of the cervix is an ancient method. Many cultures throughout history tried to block the entrance to the uterus to prevent pregnancy. Whether by assorted leaves, half a lemon, or several other ideas. The diaphragm itself was invented following the invention of rubber in the 19th century. Shortly after the creation of the new material, a gynecologist by the name Has developed the first diaphragm. A physicist by the name Edward Foote designed and sold the first model in The United States.

From the time of its invention, the popularity of the diaphragm has seen ups and downs. Today, as women are increasingly aware of their bodies and the desire to use natural contraceptives increases, many women choose the diaphragm. This is because the diaphragm is natural and does not interfere with the endocrine system or the woman's hormones.

How to use a diaphragm

The woman inserts the diaphragm into her vagina either immediately before sexual intercourse or a couple hours before. The diaphragm must not be removed for 6-8 hours following sexual activity. If the couple would like to engage in multiple instances of intercourse before the 6-8 hour window has ended, it is recommended to insert additional spermicide without removing the diaphragm. After removal, the diaphragm is to be rinsed well with water and soap.

Who is a diaphragm right for?

- Women and young couples who are interested in preventing pregnancy before having children.
- Women who have previously given birth who are re-evaluating the form of birth control that is right for them.
- Women who are of menopausal age, with a low risk of becoming pregnant, are looking for a comfortable, local, effective, non-invasive, and non-hormonal form of birth control, with no side effects.

Pros of using a diaphragm

- When used correctly, the diaphragm is effective in 85%-92% of instances.
- The diaphragm has a localized effect, without hormones or permanent devices in the woman's body.
- A reusable form of contraceptive that may be used by a woman for years.
- The woman controls her use of the diaphragm and does not need to rely on her partner or doctor.
- Does not affect sex drive or pleasure.
- Can be inserted easily and quickly, allowing her to remain spontaneous.
- Appropriate for couples who follow Jewish Law.

Cons of using a diaphragm

- Requires instruction on how to insert the diaphragm and make sure it is placed next to the cervix. The education is given by the diaphragm fitter from whom you purchase the diaphragm.
- The diaphragm does not prevent the transfer of infections or sexually transmitted diseases.
- A woman cannot use the diaphragm with an allergy to latex, silicone, or spermicide.
- There is a slight increase in instances of diaphragm users who develop urinary tract infections. Therefore, a diaphragm is not recommended for women who suffer from chronic infections.
- Women cannot use a diaphragm with a prolapsed uterus, bladder, posterior vaginal wall, as well as loose vaginal walls, or a tilted uterus.

Some important things to remember:

- While the diaphragm is a reusable contraceptive device that can be used for years, it is important to get refitted after each birth and after a weight fluctuation of 4-5 kilograms.
- The diaphragm does not prevent sexually transmitted diseases.
- It is important to remove the diaphragm after 8 hours. It is not recommended to leave it in for more than 24 hours.

Personalized Diaphragms

Being that every woman's body is different, and the location of the cervix varies from woman to woman, there are different types and sizes of diaphragms. It is vital to be fitted before beginning the use of a diaphragm. In Israel, there are multiple women who have been trained to do so, and they have the knowledge required to find the right size and instruct its proper use.

A fitting can take between an hour to two hours and is very personal. The fitting requires a vaginal exam to determine the cervix's location, after which different sizes are tried until the correct size is found. The right size is a diaphragm that covers the cervix, does not move easily, and can be easily inserted and removed by the woman.

The fitting is a unique opportunity in which the woman may get to know her body, profoundly and perhaps in a new way. We learn the internal and external body structure to better understand how to use the diaphragm effectively and better understand the female reproductive system. After we meet and do an overview of the diaphragm, we will find the correct size using the woman's measurements. Once the woman has been fitted, we will instruct on proper insertion and how to check correct positioning, extraction etc. Following the fitting, a woman can always come with any question or concern.

Throughout your fitting, it is essential to remember that the professional who is performing the fitting must give you a comfortable and secure feeling. This is your body, and you are always in control of what happens to it. If something is uncomfortable, or if you feel uneasy - you can always stop. If you have a sensitivity or pain in any part of your body, it is worthwhile to try and find a solution with the person performing the fitting.

Conclusion

The diaphragm is an excellent solution for many women who are looking for a natural, hormone-free, non-invasive form of birth control. The diaphragm allows the woman to remain in control, without forfeiting spontaneity. Diaphragm fitting and education opens the door to a deeper understanding of the woman's body and allows for a woman to better connect to herself.