



OFFICE OF POPULATION AFFAIRS

# Sponge with Spermicide

## THE FACTS



# Sponge with Spermicide THE FACTS



## Quick Facts

### Effectiveness in Preventing Pregnancy:

- Of 100 women using this method for one year, between 12 and 24 may get pregnant.
- Your risk of getting pregnant is much higher if you have had a baby, or if you do not use the sponge correctly each time you have sex.

### Use:

- Insert the sponge into the vagina before having sex
- Leave it in place for at least six hours after sex.
- The sponge works up to 24 hours.
- Remove the sponge using the loop string and throw it away within 24-30 hours of inserting it.

### STI Protection:

- No

### Office Visit Required:

- Yes, prescriptions are required for the patch.

## What is the sponge?

The sponge is a small, disk-shaped device made of soft foam that contains the spermicide nonoxynol-9 (N-9). It's sold in the U.S. under the brand name *Today Sponge*.



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## How do I use it?

- The sponge is placed inside the vagina prior to having sex and works by covering the cervix to prevent sperm from reaching an egg. The spermicide inside the sponge kills sperm.
- The sponge must be kept in place at least six hours after sex. It offers protection for up to 24 hours.
- You do not need to add more spermicide each time you have sex.
- The sponge must be removed after 24-30 hours to avoid toxic shock syndrome. (see Drawbacks section for more information)
- Throw the sponge away after removal.



## How do I get it?

You do not need a prescription or an ID to buy the sponge with spermicide. The sponge is available over the counter at pharmacies, clinics, and some grocery stores.

To search for a family planning center, visit <http://www.hhs.gov/opa/>

## How effective is it?

Of 100 women who use this method each year, 12 - 24 may get pregnant. The exact risk of pregnancy when using the sponge depends on:

- Whether or not you've had a baby. Childbirth stretches the vagina and cervix. This means the sponge may not fit as tightly against the cervix, making it less effective.
- If you use the sponge correctly each time you have sex.



## Advantages of the sponge

- The sponge is safe, simple to use, and available without a prescription.
- You can insert the sponge before having sex and it offers protection for up to 24 hours.
- The sponge does not rely on the male to be effective.



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## Drawbacks of the sponge

- The sponge does not protect you against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV.
- Some women may experience irritation or allergic reactions with the sponge.
- Spermicides containing N-9 can irritate the vagina and rectum. N-9 may increase the risk of getting the AIDS virus (HIV) from an infected partner.
- You need to remove the sponge 24-30 hours after insertion in order to avoid [toxic shock syndrome \(TSS\)](#). TSS is a rare but life-threatening infection.
- The sponge might be difficult for some women to remove.



## Sources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- [Unintended Pregnancy Prevention: Contraception](#)

Food and Drug Administration

- [Birth Control: Medicines to Help You](#)

Office on Women's Health

- [Girlshealth.gov: Types of Birth Control](#)

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