

Spermicides

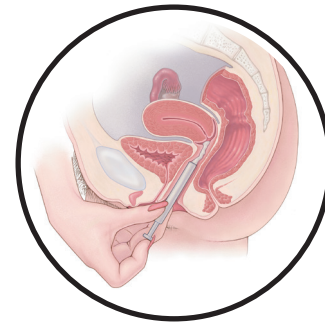
A chemical called nonoxynol-9 comes in the form of cream (only for use with diaphragms), gel, foam, film, or suppository. By inserting spermicide in front of the cervix, in the vagina, it destroys sperm on contact. Spermicides should be used along with another method of contraception, such as a condom, because alone they are not highly effective.

How does it work?

- Nonoxynol-9 is a surfactant that destroys the sperm cell membrane.
- Spermicides are available at pharmacies without a prescription, in the form of cream, gel, foam, film, or suppository.
- Spermicidal film must be inserted into the vagina at least 15 minutes before intercourse. It will melt and disperse. If more than 3 hours have passed before intercourse, another film must be inserted.
- Spermicidal foam is inserted into the vagina using an applicator. It is effective immediately and for up to one hour after insertion. It must be applied again for each act of intercourse.

How effective is it?

- Vaginal spermicides are among the least effective of all contraception options. Failure rates in the first year of use vary from 18% with perfect use to 28% with typical use.
- Spermicides should be used with another barrier method of contraception, such as a diaphragm or sponge.



Advantages

- + No hormones
- + When used with another barrier method, effectiveness increases
- + May also protect against bacterial infections and pelvic inflammatory disease

Disadvantages

- Not highly effective
- Using spermicide can be messy
- Must be inserted right before sex, because it's only effective for one hour
- May irritate the entrance of the vagina or the tip of the penis
- May increase the risk of HIV transmission
- Does not protect against STIs