

You and your cap

The cap works by covering over the opening into the cervix (neck of the womb) and stopping the sperm from swimming up to meet the ovum (egg). It is used with a sperm killing cream or jelly (spermicidal) which also helps to lubricate the cap. Six hours after intercourse any sperm that are left are too weak to swim and fertilise the ovum.

HOW TO USE IT

Put the cream or jelly on the cap as you have been shown and put it in at any convenient time before you are going to have sex. Make sure the cervix is covered when the cap is in place. Leave the cap in for at least 6 hours, but take it out as soon as is convenient after that, eg. when you get up in the morning if you have had sex the night before.

If it has been in place for more than 2 hours when you want to have sex some of the spermicide may have leaked out and you will need to add more, Do this either by putting in some more cream or jelly with an applicator or by using a special sperm killing tablet (vaginal pessary).

Don't worry if your period starts while the cap is inside. It may discolour the rubber but does no harm to either you or the cap. Normally you will be asked to come back wearing your cap a week after your first fitting. This is to check that you have put it in properly, that the size is right and that you like the method.

HOW TO LOOK AFTER IT

Wash the cap well under warm running water as soon as you take it out. A little mild soap is all the disinfectant you need and even that is not absolutely necessary.

Diaphragms

Test it for weak spots by very gently stretching the rubber while you are rinsing it and then hold it up to the light to check for holes. You can gently bend the rim to help the cap keep its round shape. Diaphragms last from six months to two years depending on how often they are used and how long they are usually left inside.

Other types, e.g.. cervical, vault, dumas

Check for faults by examining regularly under a good light. They usually last for at least 2 years.

All types

Pat your cap dry and keep it in the plastic container. Do not dust it with talcum powder or use disinfectants when washing it.

THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR

If you start having problems with your waterworks such as going more often, pain or discomfort when you pass urine, feeling that you still want to go when you have finished, these may be symptoms of cystitis. It may be because the cap is a little too big and is pressing on your bladder, you should consult your doctor.

If you feel itchy down below (or your partner does) whenever you use the cap this may be because you have become allergic to either the cream or jelly or the rubber of the cap. You should see your family planning doctor about this, to check that it really is an allergy and not

something else eg. thrush. If you need to try a different spermicide you need expert advice with this as some spermicides with different names have the same ingredients.

You do not need a doctor's prescription to get a new cap or supply of spermicide. If you have had your cap fitted before you have regular sex you should have a check up on the size three to six months later. Otherwise you only need the size checked if you have lost or gained more than 5kg (11lbs) in weight or have had a baby or gynaecological operation.

You should see a doctor if you have any problems with the cap and remember, you should have a cervical smear taken every five years.

Some preparations may damage your cap.

Baby Oil and oil based vaginal preparations can damage diaphragms and make them less effective. Some pessaries used for treatment of thrush may damage your cap.

Ecostatin, Masnoderm, Travogyn, Lomexin
Nystan and Canestan - effect not known.

GOOD NEWS

People who use caps or condoms (barriers) are LESS likely to get cancer of the neck of the womb than anyone else except those who don't have sex at all