THE CERVICAL CAP

What is a Cervical Cap?
- A cervical cap is a method of birth control. It is a small device made of soft latex rubber that fits over your cervix.
- Cervical caps come in different sizes and must be fitted by a clinician.
- Cervical caps are no longer made in Canada. Please call 1-800 SEX SENSE for information about clinicians who can supply and fit the cervical cap.

How does the Cervical Cap work?
- Barrier method of birth control (similar to the diaphragm) used with spermicide.
- It is held in place by suction so that sperm cannot enter the uterus.
- The cap must be checked for correct placement after insertion and before every act of intercourse.
- The cap must be left in place for at least 6 hours after the last act of intercourse but no longer than a total of 24 hours.

How effective is it?
- In women who have not had children, the effectiveness of this method ranges from 84% (actual use) to 91% (perfect use)
- In women who have had children, the effectiveness of this method ranges from 68% (actual use) to 74% (perfect use)
- With consistent and correct usage, an average of 9% of women using this method of birth control will have pregnancies. The cervical cap must be used every time you have intercourse.

Advantages
- Small and easy to carry
- May be put in up to an hour before sex
- Will work for 24 hours during which you can have sex as many times as you want
- Your partner doesn’t have to know you are using it

Disadvantages
- Must be fitted by a clinician
- May interrupt sex
- May increase your risk for inflammation of the surface of the cervix
- May be difficult for some women to insert a cervical cap properly
- Possible to dislodge during use and increase risk for pregnancy
- New fitting is necessary after having a baby, abortion, miscarriage, or a weight gain or loss of 10 pounds
- Latex (rubber) allergies may cause irritation
Recommendations

- During the first 8 to 10 times you use the cap, also use a spermicide and condoms for back up. Check the cap before and after intercourse to make sure it stays in place.
- Use the cap every time you have intercourse except during your period.
- To avoid infections, including toxic shock, do not use the cap any time you have vaginal bleeding or have any vaginal, cervical or pelvic infection. Be careful to wash your hands and the cap as instructed.

When do I return to the clinic?

- Two to four weeks after initial fitting to check the fit, and then annually. It is important to continue with regular Pap tests.
- To re-fit the cap after having a baby, a miscarriage or late abortion, or a gain or loss of 10 pounds.

If you experience any of the following symptoms call your clinic or health care provider

- Concerns/problems with cap use (trouble putting it in or taking it out, it doesn’t feel right, comes off by itself, etc.)
- Abnormal vaginal bleeding, discharge, bad smell, or other irritation
- Pain or discomfort

Considerations

To date there has been no link between the use of the cap and toxic shock. However, to avoid this possibility, it is recommended that the cap:

- Not be left in for more than 24 hours
- Not be used during your period or if you are bleeding from your vagina for any reason. Use another method during these times.
- Not be used if you have any vaginal, cervical or pelvic infection

What if I have sex and don’t use Birth Control?

Did you know that ...for up to 120 hours (5 days)... after sex...you can take emergency pills to avoid becoming pregnant? (The sooner they are taken after an episode of unprotected intercourse the more effective they are)...AND for 7 days...after sex...you can have an IUD put in, so you won’t become pregnant. Not all doctors know about this. IF you need to know more or would like the phone numbers of doctors or clinics near you that have emergency birth control, call the SEX SENSE line 1-800-739-7367 or 731-7803 in the lower mainland.