Dear Newlywed,

Since you are a new diaphragm user, the difficulties and discomfort you've experienced so far could be related to your inexperience with this contraceptive option. Insertion gets easier with practice. Diaphragms come in an array of shapes (coil, flat, arc-like) and sizes, ranging from 50 - 105 mm (about 2 - 4 inches) in diameter. Some women find that using the kind of diaphragm that has two hinges and bending it into the shape of an arc is easier to place into the vagina. This prevents it from springing open before it's firmly in place in your vagina and popped open again, covering the cervix completely. Once inside, a woman should not be able to feel a diaphragm.

If you continue to sense the diaphragm shifting around and/or placing pressure on your bladder (so you feel as if you will pee), then a refitting might be in order. When you are first sized for a diaphragm, your gynecologist or women's health care provider will insert a variety of fitting rings into your vagina. Then, together you can decide the largest ring that can fit comfortably for you. Practicing inserting and using this ring at your provider's office until you get the hang of it can make a difference. Diaphragms do move a bit inside of a woman because her body goes through changes during arousal. That's why the spermicide is so important.

It's also common for diaphragms to seem less comfy, even after years of tried and true use.
Instances when you definitely need to go in for a refitting include:

- weight change of more than 10 pounds
- previous pregnancy
- past miscarriage or pregnancy termination
- having had vaginal or pelvic surgery
- any pain or discomfort, either on insertion or during use

Another common cause of discomfort is a change in the shape of a woman's cervix. Beginning intercourse, whether for the first time or after a long abstinence, is one of the most common reasons for this change, though hormonal modifications can also trigger some cervical shape shifting.

Whatever the reason for your discomfort might be, forcing its users to resort to Houdini-like dexterity was never the diaphragm's intent. A trip to a gynecologist or other health care provider will, at the very least, provide a second training session on insertion and might lead to a newly-sized, correctly and comfortably fitted diaphragm for you. If you are at Columbia, log in to Open Communicator [2] or call x4-2284 to schedule an appointment.

Finally, if after re-fitting and practice you still don't feel secure using a diaphragm, then you may switch to another method of birth control. Your gynecologist or women's health care provider can discuss other contraceptive options with you and/or your husband.

Alice!

Category:
Non-hormonal Options & Choices [3]

Related questions

IUD (intrauterine device): Another birth control option [4]
The contraceptive patch (Ortho Evra) [5]
Puttin' a ring on it... The NuvaRing that is! [6]
Diaphragm and cervical cap effectiveness [7]
Takin' a shot at Depo-Provera [8]

Published date:
Oct 17, 2003
Last reviewed on:
Jan 10, 2008