Are there alternatives to nonoxynol-9 spermicide? [1]

Alice,

Do you know if there is an alternative to nonoxynol-9 spermicide?? I'm allergic and was wondering if and where I could get it.

Thank you.

Answer

Dear Reader,

Unfortunately, the short answer to your question is no, there are not currently any spermicidal alternatives to nonoxynol-9 available to purchase. Past alternatives have been removed from the market, and new alternatives are still in the process of being studied. The good news is that there are other, non-spermicidal methods of birth control, such as hormonal methods, that may fit your needs.

You're certainly not alone in your interest of this method. Spermicide is a popular option for birth control because it is easily accessible, simple to use, and provides added lubrication. Results from recent scientific studies for newer alternatives look promising, but more research is still needed. Some of the new ingredients being studied that may be able to function as spermicide (and provide other added benefits) without nonoxynol-9 include:

- **Desgalactotigonin (DGT):** An extract of the weed *Chenopodium album* [2], DGT seems to be healthier for the vagina than nonoxynol-9 (even for those who aren’t allergic) because DGT does not appear to interfere with lactobacillus acidophilus—natural microorganisms found in the vagina — as nonoxynol-9 does.
- **Curcumin:** Derived from the herb *turmeric* [3], Curcumin may also fight off common yeast and bacterial infections in addition to acting as a spermicidal agent.
- **Platycodin D (PD):** Part of the “balloon flower” *Platycodon grandiflorum* [4], PD seems to cause less irritation to vaginal tissue than nonoxynol-9.

Though it may be some time before new spermicides are deemed safe and sold commercially, many non-spermicidal birth control options are currently available. Planned Parenthood’s My Method
or a trip to your health care provider may be a good place start exploring what might work best for you. You can also check out the related Q&As Taking birth control pills when I need it — Effective? and Let’s go condom shopping! Brands, sizes, textures — what to buy? for more information about available options. One word of caution: the contraceptive sponge does contain nonoxynol-9, so that wouldn’t be a suitable alternative for those with a nonoxynol-9 allergy. Happy hunting!

Alice!

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