

# Barrier Methods: Spermicides and Gel


## Birth Control Guide for People With CF

### SPERMICIDES

You insert spermicides in your vagina before having sex. They prevent sperm from potentially reaching an egg. These products work by disabling the sperm. This is so they cannot swim well enough to reach an egg.

Spermicides come in many forms, such as creams, gels, foams, vaginal suppositories, or films. You can buy spermicide over the counter at the drug store or online. They may also be free at places like Planned Parenthood, student health clinics, or community health clinics.

You can use spermicide with other methods including condoms, pulling out (withdrawal method), or fertility awareness (tracking your cycle). This can further reduce your chances of getting pregnant. Spermicides do not protect against STIs.

HOW WELL DOES IT WORK?	PERFECT USE	COMMON USE
Spermicide 	84%	79%

### HOW TO USE SPERMICIDE

- Insert spermicide 10–15 minutes before having sex.
- Read the packaging. Most products only work for about one hour after applying.
- Put in spermicide each time that you have sex even if it has been less than an hour since the last time you had sex.
- These products may irritate the vagina or penis, especially if you use multiple doses per day. You may need to try more than one brand to find the one that is least likely to cause irritation for you.
- It is safe to use spermicide while on your period.
- It is safe to use spermicide with condoms.<sup>1</sup>

## BIRTH CONTROL GEL

**Lactic acid/citric acid/potassium bitartrate (Phexxi®)** is a vaginal gel that you insert into your vagina before sex. It comes in a prefilled applicator that you insert like a tampon.

It is not a spermicide. But, it works in a similar way to disable sperm so that they cannot swim well enough to get to an egg. It affects sperm by changing the pH inside your vagina. Phexxi may irritate the vagina or penis less than spermicide products. It does not protect against STIs.

HOW WELL DOES IT WORK?	PERFECT USE	COMMON USE
Birth Control Gel	93%	86%

Phexxi does need a prescription. To get a prescription for Phexxi, you can:

- Ask your primary care doctor, gynecologist, or telehealth providers
- Go to a student health center, Planned Parenthood, or other family planning center
- Go through telehealth on Phexxi.com

### HOW TO USE PHEXXI:

- Each box of Phexxi comes with 12 prefilled applicators. Phexxi is good for one hour after you put it in.
- Use a new dose of Phexxi each time you have sex. Do this even if it has been less than an hour since the last time you had sex.
- It is safe to use Phexxi with condoms, diaphragms, and cervical caps. Do NOT use Phexxi with birth control rings.
- It is safe to use Phexxi when you are on your period.<sup>2</sup>

### REFERENCES

1. Bartz DA. Pericoital (on demand) contraception: Diaphragm, cervical cap, spermicides, and sponge. UpToDate.com. Updated Jun 6, 2024. <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/pericoital-on-demand-contraception-diaphragm-cervical-cap-spermicides-and-sponge>
2. Lactic acid/citric acid/potassium bitartrate (Phexxi®), United States Prescribing Information. [www.phexxi.com/](http://www.phexxi.com/)

This information meets the guidelines and standards of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's Education Committee.