

**RESEARCH NEWS FOR U**  
( RNFU )  
*A coffee table magazine*  
2011, 1 (1)

**Diaphragms**  
**Female-controlled method of birth control**

Arvind Singh Senior Research Fellow  
DCP Division, National Dairy Research Institute  
Karnal (Haryana), India  
Email address: [arvindsingh1091@gmail.com](mailto:arvindsingh1091@gmail.com)

While it is not in the top tier of contraceptive effectiveness, the diaphragm remains an option as a female-controlled method of birth control. Use of the diaphragm has changed dramatically in the last two and a half decades, according to data from the 1982, 1995, 2002, and 2006, 2008 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG). The diaphragm is used with a spermicide. When it is used in conjunction with spermicidal cream or gel, 16% of women will experience an unintended pregnancy in the first year of typical use; 6% will experience an unintended pregnancy in the first year of perfect use.

The diaphragm offers several benefits:

- The woman controls the method
- Its use does not involve taking a drug
- Contraception can be reversed immediately; there is no delay in returning to baseline fertility

However, the method provides no protection against HIV and some sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). A clinician must fit the device. A speculum and bimanual exam is recommended before initiating use.

**Available Spermicides**

Once a woman receives her diaphragm, contraceptive gels (spermicides) are available for use with it. All products rely on the spermicide nonoxynol-9 (N-9) for efficacy. Gynol Regular Strength contains 2% N-9, while Gynol II Extra Strength contains 3% N-9. Options Conceptrol contains 4% N-9 etc.

According to guidance from the World Health Organization, N-9 can be used as a contraceptive,

alone or in combination with a cervical barrier method, among women at low risk of HIV/STI infection who use the product no more than once daily.

**References**

Trussell J. Contraceptive efficacy. In: Hatcher RA, Trussell J, Nelson AL, *et al.* *Contraceptive Technology*. 19th ed. New York: Ardent Media; 2007.



**Arvind Singh** is working on Govt. Of India's Dept. of Biotechnology's research project. He is Master's in Biomedical Sciences, (Ph.D. Biotech.). His areas of interests are human contraceptive development, molecular research and human and animal sperm study. He is also a prose and poetry writer and manage his own research group and working as research adviser.