

SAGINAW COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
PERSONAL AND PREVENTIVE HEALTH SERVICES  
FAMILY PLANNING

**VAGINAL CONTRACEPTIVE FILM (VCF) / GEL FACT SHEET**

Vaginal Contraceptive Film (VCF) / Gel are spermicides that provide protection against pregnancy. They contain nonoxynol-9, an ingredient that kills sperm. VCF/ Gel can be used alone or with a diaphragm or condom.

**EFFECTIVENESS:**

- 78% for all concentrations of spermicide when used consistently and correctly.
- Increased effectiveness when used with other birth control methods, such as a condom.

**USE:**

- The **film** is folded and inserted with your finger deep into the vagina so it is close to the cervix (the opening of the uterus which can be felt at the top of the vagina).
- One square of **film** should be inserted 15 minutes before intercourse.
- The **gel** is inserted with a plastic applicator into the vagina where it is pushed out of the applicator to cover the cervix.
- One applicator of **gel** should be inserted no more than one hour before sex. You can have sex immediately after the **gel** is inserted.
- You must wait 15 minutes after the **film** is inserted before having sex.
- Use another application of either film or gel before each act of intercourse.
- Leave spermicide in place for at least 6 hours after intercourse. Douching is not recommended, but if you choose to douche, you must wait at least 6 hours.

\*Correct use is vital for protection against pregnancy.

**BENEFITS:**

- You will not feel the film.
- The film melts quickly and is not messy.
- With spermicides you will not experience the side effects of taking hormones.
- They provide lubrication during intercourse.
- They can be purchased over the counter and do not require a prescription.
- Several doses of gel or film can be used in one day.

**DISCONTINUATION:**

- If intercourse occurs more than 1 hour after insertion of gel or 3 hours after insertion of film, emergency contraception is available at the Family Planning Clinic.

**SIDE EFFECTS:**

- Irritation to skin of the vulva, vagina or penis
- If itching or burning occurs in you or your partner, stop using the VCF or gel and contact the clinic nurse.

**WARNING SIGNS:**

- There are no warning signs with this method

### **RISKS AND COMPLICATIONS:**

- Allergic reaction
- HIV exposure is possible
- Increased risk of bacterial vaginosis
- Increased risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) when used with the diaphragm or sponge

#### Nonoxynol-9

Until recently, it was hoped that the spermicide Nonoxynol-9 (N-9) would reduce the risk of STIs, including HIV. But recent studies have shown that N-9 offers no protection against STIs. In fact, using N-9 many times in a day may even increase the risk of infection.

Products containing N-9 should not be used:

- For anal intercourse
- By women at risk for HIV
- Multiple times a day
- To prevent STIs
- By women and men who have allergies to spermicides

Otherwise, products containing N-9 may increase a condom's contraceptive effectiveness.

**Remember, VCF / gel do not protect against all sexually transmitted infections, so it is important to use a condom each time you have sex.**

PERSONAL HEALTH CENTER  
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Visit our website: [www.saginawpublichealth.org](http://www.saginawpublichealth.org)



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Reference: Hatcher, R.A., et al, (2018) Contraceptive Technology (21<sup>st</sup>-Edition)  
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