

Vaginal Ring



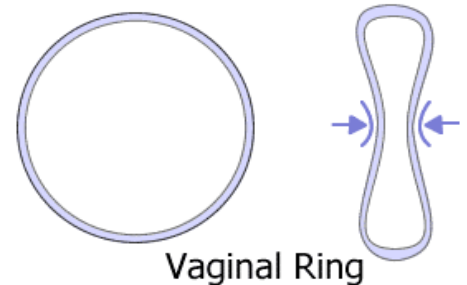
Facts About the Vaginal Contraceptive Ring

What is the vaginal hormonal "ring"?

The vaginal hormonal ring, also called "NuvaRing" or "ring" for short, is about 2 inches across, and is as flexible as a rubber band. You insert the ring into your vagina like a tampon. Once in place, you keep the ring in your vagina for 3 weeks at a time.

How does the ring work?

There are two different hormones called estrogen and progestin in the vaginal ring. When the ring is inserted into your vagina, the hormone medicine is absorbed through the wall of the vagina and enters your bloodstream to stop your ovaries from releasing eggs. The hormones also affect the lining of your uterus and mucus in your cervix.



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How effective is the ring in preventing pregnancy?

The ring is very effective, when used correctly. Doctors and researchers have found the ring to be 99% effective in preventing pregnancy.

How do I know if the ring is right for me?

The ring is an effective contraceptive that can be used safely by most women. Be sure to tell your health care provider if you have any of the following problems or if you have ever seen a doctor in the past about any of the following conditions: blood clots in your legs or lungs, heart problems, high blood pressure, gallbladder or liver disease, or severe migraine headaches. The ring does not protect against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or HIV. Women at risk of STDs should also use a female condom or male latex condom to prevent disease. Your clinician can give you more information and help you decide if the ring is right for you.

Are there any side effects with the ring?

Side effects are uncommon; occasionally women report headaches, nausea, increased vaginal discharge, and breast tenderness. The ring contains the same medicine that is in birth control pills, the hormones estrogen and progestin, so it may not be safe for you to use if you have a history of certain medical problems such as blood clots, high blood pressure, or serious migraine headaches. Other side effects are similar to birth control pills.

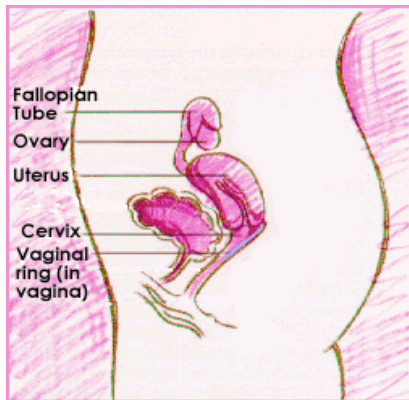
How should I use the ring?

Use the ring after you and your health care provider have both agreed that this is the best choice for you in preventing pregnancy or to treat you for other conditions such as irregular periods, acne, painful periods, or endometriosis. When you have had your questions answered and you have learned how to insert the ring, you are ready to begin.

When should I begin using the ring for the first time?

You should begin using the ring by inserting it **between Day 1 and Day 5** of your menstrual cycle. Day 1 of your cycle is the first day of bleeding. The ring should be inserted by cycle day 5 at the very latest, even if you still have your period.

Use: (3 weeks on, 1 week off) Once you insert the ring, you leave it in place for 3 weeks in a row. After 3 full weeks, you remove the ring for 1 week before you start your next cycle. You will most likely get your period during the "ring-free" week. This is the (7 day) break in between cycles when you are not using the ring. Usually your period comes 2-3 days after you remove the ring.



How do I insert the ring?

1. Before you begin, wash and dry your hands.
2. With clean hands, gently open the foil pouch that the ring comes in. Save the pouch so you can throw the used vaginal ring away in it later.
3. Make sure you find a private place such as your room or the bathroom, so you'll feel relaxed.
4. You may want to lie down in bed with knees bent, or squat down with knees bent or standing with one leg on a chair or toilet seat. (It's similar to inserting a tampon.)
5. Using 1 hand (right hand if you are right handed, left if you are left handed), hold the vaginal ring between your thumb and index finger. Hold the sides together so they are touching.
6. While holding the ring, gently insert the ring into your vagina as far as it will go.

Will I feel the ring?

Most women who use the vaginal ring do not feel it once it is in place. If you feel the ring, gently push the ring a little further back into the vagina. The ring should not hurt or cause discomfort once it is inserted and placed correctly. If it feels uncomfortable, remove it, read the "How do I insert the ring?" directions again, and then try to insert it once more. If you still can't insert the ring without discomfort, stop and contact your health care provider.

If I push the ring too far up inside my vagina, will it get lost?

No. The ring can't get lost inside of your vagina. Your cervix, which is located at the end of your vagina, prevents the ring from traveling up into your uterus.

How long do I leave the ring inside my vagina?

Once in place, the ring should stay inside your vagina for 3 complete weeks unless you are having problems such as new migraine headaches or severe nausea (feeling like you want to throw up most of the time).

You will remove the ring after 3 complete weeks and wait 1 full week before you insert a new ring.

Is it possible for the ring to fall out?

It's possible but unlikely the ring will fall out. If the vaginal ring is inserted properly, the muscles inside your vagina hold the ring in place. The ring could possibly come out if it is not inserted high enough into your vagina, if you are very constipated, straining with a bowel movement, or it could slip out if you are removing a tampon.

What do I do if the ring slips out?

If the ring slips out of your vagina, it's okay to gently rinse it under cool water (**not hot water!**) then re-insert the ring in your vagina as soon as possible. You must do this within 3 hours. If you wait longer than 3 hours or forget to put the ring back in your vagina, there is a chance that the ring will not prevent pregnancy. Place the ring back in your vagina and use a "back up" method of contraception, such as condoms for 7 days.

Can I use tampons?

Yes. However, the ring may come out when the tampon is removed. Generally you will not have your period during the 3 weeks while you have the ring in place. You will probably have your period during the "ring-free week" and you won't have to worry about using a tampon at that time. If the ring slips out, follow the about directions.

How do I take the vaginal hormonal ring out of my vagina?

Insert your index and middle finger of one of your hands into your vagina and gently feel for the ring. Once you feel the ring, hook your index finger around it and guide it out with your middle finger, pulling forward until the ring comes out. This should not hurt at all because the ring is thin and flexible.

Once I take the ring out, do I just throw it away?

It may seem silly but how you throw the ring away is very important. This is because there may be some active medicine left on the ring. Once you have removed the ring, place it in the foil pouch that it came in, seal the pouch, and then throw it away in the trash- away from young children and/or pets. If you forgot to save the pouch, either wrap the ring in a piece of aluminum foil or place it in a zip-lock plastic sandwich size bag. The ring is NOT flushable, so DO NOT flush it down the toilet.

Do I need to take the ring out on the same day of the week that I put it in?

Yes, you should remove the ring on the same day of the week that you started. For example, if you inserted the ring in on Sunday at 9:00 pm, you will need to remove the ring 3 full weeks later on a Sunday at about the same time, at 9:00 pm.

What if I forget to take the ring out?

If you leave the ring in for up to 4 weeks, remove the ring, throw it away, and wait 1 week before you insert a new ring.

If you leave the ring in your vagina for longer than 4 weeks and you are sexually active, there's a chance that you could become pregnant. You must use another birth control method, such as condoms, for 7 days, but insert a new ring.

Check right away with your health care provider about whether you need emergency contraception or a pregnancy test.

WARNING SIGNS: You need to call a doctor or the family planning clinic if I have any of the following early warning signs develop:

A – Abdominal pain (severe)

C - Chest pain or shortness of breath

H – Headaches (severe); dizziness, weakness, numbness

E – Eye problems – blurred vision, flashing lights, or blindness; speech problems

S – Severe leg pain (calf or thigh)

What if I decide to stop using the ring?

You may stop using the ring at any time. You should use another method of birth control if you do not want to become pregnant. If you are having side effects, or are unsure about how to use the ring—call the clinic to ask questions and/or receive another method of birth control. **Remember...regular exams for routine healthcare, including screenings for sexually transmitted diseases and cancer, are strongly recommended!**

Questions??

If you have questions about side effects, or if you are unsure about using the ring-call the clinic right away!