



OFFICE OF POPULATION AFFAIRS

Vaginal Ring

THE FACTS



Vaginal Ring THE FACTS



Quick Facts

Effectiveness in Preventing Pregnancy:

- Of 100 women who use this method each year, 9 may get pregnant
- The risk is lower in women who use the ring correctly.

Use:

- You put a new ring in the vagina for three weeks.
- During the fourth week, you remove the ring and your period will probably begin.
- Put a new ring in after one week.

STI Protection:

- No

Office Visit Required:

- Yes, prescriptions are required to purchase the birth control vaginal ring.

What is the birth control vaginal ring?

The birth control vaginal ring is a small, flexible, plastic ring that is inserted in the vagina. The ring contains the same hormones (progestin and estrogen) found in most birth control pills. Hormones are chemicals that control how different parts of your body work.

The hormones in the ring are absorbed into the bloodstream from the walls of the vagina and prevent pregnancy by keeping the ovaries from releasing eggs. The hormones also cause the cervical mucus to thicken, which keeps sperm from meeting with and fertilizing an egg.



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How do I use it?

The vaginal ring is easy to use. Squeeze the ring between your thumb and index finger and gently push it into your vagina. When you first begin using the ring, use back-up birth control (like a condom) for the first seven days after you insert the vaginal ring.

It is important to keep track of when the ring is inserted and removed. Leave the ring in place for three weeks (21 days) and then remove it for one week (seven days). Your period will occur during the ring-free week. After the off week, just start over and put a fresh ring in for three weeks. The birth control ring is effective even if left in for longer than 21 days.

If the ring falls out for any reason and you are not able to put it back within three hours, replace it and also use another birth control method as well (such as condoms) until the ring has been in place for seven days in a row.

Discuss your medical history with your health care provider before using the ring and let them know if you develop any side effects.



How do I get it?

You need a prescription. The vaginal ring can be purchased at pharmacies and is available at family planning centers. It is sold under the brand name NuvaRing.

To search for a family planning center near you, go to <http://www.hhs.gov/opa/>

How effective is it?

Of 100 women who use this method each year, about 9 may get pregnant.

The risk of pregnancy is much less for women who use the vaginal ring correctly (putting it in place for three weeks, removing it for exactly one week, and then inserting a new ring). Certain medications such as Rifampin (taken to treat tuberculosis) and supplements (such as St. John's Wort) may make the ring less effective.

Talk with your health care provider if you have any questions about using the ring.



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Advantages of the vaginal ring

- The ring is easy to use, controlled by the female, and does not require the consent of her partner.
- The ring is safe and works well in preventing pregnancy. Using the vaginal ring means you do not have to think about birth control when you want to have sex.
- Your periods may be lighter when using the ring.
- The ring may offer benefits that include fewer menstrual cramps, less acne, and stronger bones.



Drawbacks of the vaginal ring

- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV.
- Requires a visit to a health provider and a prescription.
- Certain medications such as Rifampin (taken to treat tuberculosis) and supplements (such as St. John's Wort) may make the ring less effective.
- Some women experience vaginal discharge, discomfort in the vagina, and mild irritation.
- There is a **very slight** increased risk of toxic shock syndrome.
- Like the combined birth control pill, use of the ring may increase the risk of blood clots, heart attacks, and strokes. This risk is higher in women who are very overweight.



Sources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- [Unintended Pregnancy Prevention: Contraception](#)
- [United States Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive Use, 2010](#)

"Contraceptive Technology," Robert A. Hatcher, MD, MPH et. al., 20th revised edition, Contraceptive Technology Communications Inc., 2011

Food and Drug Administration

- [Birth Control: Medicines to Help You](#)



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Office on Women's Health

- [Girlshealth.gov: Types of Birth Control](http://girlshealth.gov)

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