

## What is the Vaginal Ring (Nuvaring®)?

The Vaginal Ring is a clear, flexible, thin, plastic ring that you place in the vagina where it stays for one cycle providing a continuous low dose of 2 hormones (estrogen and progestin). It prevents pregnancy by stopping the release of an egg (ovulation), thickening the cervical fluid, and changing the lining of the uterus.

## How effective is the Vaginal Ring?

The ring is a very effective method of birth control. The ring is about 93% effective at preventing pregnancy in typical use, which means that around 7 out of 100 people who use it as their only form of birth control will get pregnant in one year. With consistent and correct use as described in this fact sheet, it can be over 99% effective.

## How can I get the Vaginal Ring?

You can visit a clinic to get the ring or a prescription for it and talk with a healthcare provider about whether the ring is right for you.

Advantages of the Vaginal Ring	Disadvantages of the Vaginal Ring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Periods may be more predictable/regular and lighter</li> <li>• Less period cramping</li> <li>• Decreased symptoms of Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) and perimenopause</li> <li>• Can be used to skip or shorten your periods</li> <li>• Less anemia/iron deficiency caused by heavy periods</li> <li>• Does not affect your ability to get pregnant in the future - once stopped your fertility quickly returns</li> <li>• Easy to stop using and if you have side effects they go away very quickly</li> <li>• Improved acne</li> <li>• Some protection against non-cancerous breast tumours, ovarian cysts, and fibroids</li> <li>• Decreased risk of ovarian and uterine cancer</li> <li>• May protect against osteoporosis and endometriosis</li> <li>• Sexual enjoyment may increase as using the ring reduces the fear of pregnancy and some users experience an increase in vaginal lubrication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must remember to remove and replace the ring once a month</li> <li>• Some users may experience mild side effects such as: spotting, nausea, breast tenderness, headaches, or dizziness (usually these improve in the first few months of use)</li> <li>• Possibility of high blood pressure</li> <li>• No protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)</li> <li>• Rare but serious complications of using the ring include blood clots, heart attack, stroke, or liver tumours</li> <li>• Risks increase with age when accompanied by certain other risk factors such as smoking, especially more than 15 cigarettes a day</li> <li>• Some people can not use the ring such as people who cannot have estrogen - be sure to let your health care provider know if you have any other medical conditions</li> </ul>

## When do I start the Vaginal Ring and when is it effective?

It is recommended you start the ring right away. The ring is effective in preventing pregnancy after one week of use, so you need to use a backup method of birth control such as condoms, or not have sex for 7 days. You do not have to wait for your period to start, but if you happen to start on the first day of your period you don't need to use a backup method of birth control as the ring is considered effective immediately.

## How do I use the Vaginal Ring?

The vaginal ring is based on a 28-day cycle. You must insert the vaginal ring into your vagina for at least 21 days. Then you can:

- take a short ring-free break of no more than 7 days, OR
- take no break and immediately insert a new ring after 21 days OR
- keep the ring in your vagina for up to 28 days and then immediately insert a new ring

In order to be protected from pregnancy for the whole month, you must insert your new ring no longer than 7 days after removing the previous ring. Periods that occur while using the ring are a result of taking a break from hormones. Not taking a break from hormones or a shorter than 7-day break to lighten or skip periods is safe and may make the ring more effective.

## How do I insert/remove the Vaginal Ring?

- Wash and dry your hands, then remove the ring from the foil pouch.
- Find a comfortable position (lying down, squatting, sitting on the toilet, or standing with one foot resting on a higher surface).
- Pinch the ring between your thumb and index finger, so that it becomes long and narrow.
- Gently insert the pinched ring into your vagina and release it. If you can feel the ring, use your finger to push it higher until it is comfortable. The ring cannot go too deep or get lost inside your vagina.
- The ring does not have to be positioned in any specific way - as long as it is in and comfortable, the hormones can be absorbed by the vagina.
- The ring can be used with tampons.
- After three weeks, remove your ring by inserting your finger into your vagina and pulling it out gently.
- Place the used ring in the foil package and put it in the garbage. Do not flush it down the toilet.

## What if my ring came out or I forgot to change it on time?

The muscles of the vagina keep the vaginal ring in place. In rare cases, the ring can slip out of the vagina such as during a bowel movement (pooping). Removing the ring for sexual intercourse is not recommended.

### Ring out for less than 3 hours

→ Rinse it with water and put it back into your vagina and you will still be protected from pregnancy.

### Ring out for more than 3 hours

→ If you still have your ring rinse it with water and reinsert it as soon as possible or if you lost your ring insert a new one as soon as possible. You may not be protected from pregnancy. To reduce the chance of getting pregnant:

- Keep it in until the scheduled ring removal day (21 days after you first inserted this ring).
- Skip your ring-free break this month, which means you likely won't have a period (this is safe). This means inserting a new ring right after removing the current one.
- Use a backup method such as condoms, or do not have intercourse until you've had a ring back in for 7 days in a row.
- Consider using emergency contraception if you had sex without a condom in the last 5-7 days. For information on emergency contraception, please see our website at [www.optionsforsexualhealth.org](http://www.optionsforsexualhealth.org)

### Forgot to take ring out on time

→ If it has been less than 28 days, take the ring out and start your next ring on time. You will still be protected.

→ If the ring has been in for more than 28 days, take the ring out and insert a new ring immediately for at least 21 days. Use a backup method such as condoms or do not have sex until you've had the new ring back in for 7 days in a row and consider using emergency contraception if you had sex without a condom in the last 5-7 days.

**Seek medical attention immediately if you have any of the following ACHES symptoms, as they could indicate a serious complication:**

**A**bdominal pain, especially on the right side of your stomach, below your rib cage

**C**hest or arm pain, shortness of breath, coughing up blood

**H**eadaches, severe and not relieved by over the counter pain medications

**E**ye problems, blurred vision, flashing lights, double vision, blindness

**S**welling, redness, numbness, tingling or pain in the legs

Some medications and over-the counter herbal supplements may interact with or decrease the effectiveness of birth control. Be sure to mention that you are using birth control to your health care provider or pharmacist.

## Questions? We're here for you!

We know it can be confusing to choose and use a method. We are here to help.

You can visit one of our Options for Sexual Health Clinics to speak with a health care provider. Our Sex Sense Team is available Monday-Friday 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. by phone 1-800-739-7367 or by email at [SexSense.org](http://SexSense.org) to answer your questions about birth control, or any other questions about sex, sexuality, or sexual health. This fact sheet contains general information and should not be used in place of individual consultation with a qualified healthcare provider.