



Vaginal Contraceptive Ring (NuvaRing®)

What is the vaginal contraceptive ring?

- The vaginal contraceptive ring, also known as the birth control ring, is a method of contraception.
- The ring contains synthetic forms of the 2 female hormones, estrogen and progesterone.

What are the benefits of the vaginal contraceptive ring?

While the ring is primarily used to prevent pregnancy, it has other benefits as well including:

- Make your periods more regular and easier to predict
- Reduce period cramps
- Make your period lighter with less blood loss and a lower risk of anemia
- Improve acne
- Reduce risk of ovarian and endometrial cancer

How do I use the vaginal contraceptive ring?

- The ring is inserted into the vagina and remains there for 3 weeks in a row.
- After 3 weeks, remove the ring and discard it. You will then have 1 week without a ring in your vagina. During this hormone-free break, you may have a period.

How do I insert the vaginal contraceptive ring?

- To insert the ring, wash and dry your hands and choose a comfortable position (lying down or standing up). Open the pouch and hold the ring with your thumb and index finger and press the sides of the ring, folding it together.
- Insert the folded ring into your vagina and use your index finger to gently push it up further. If it feels uncomfortable, you may not have pushed it up far enough.
- The ring does not have to be in an exact position to work so it is normal if it moves.

When should I start using the vaginal contraceptive ring?

- You can start using the ring the day you pick it up from the pharmacy, regardless of where you are in your menstrual cycle. Another method of contraception (called back-up contraception) is required for 7 days when you first get started. Back-up contraception can include using barrier contraceptives such as condoms.

Should I remove my vaginal contraceptive ring during intercourse?

- You can keep your ring inserted during intercourse. Always check that it is in your vagina before and after intercourse to ensure that you are protected from pregnancy.

What vaginal products are safe to use with the vaginal contraceptive ring?

- You can use tampons if needed while the NuvaRing® is in your vagina. Ensure the ring does not accidentally get pulled out while removing your tampon. If it does, rinse with lukewarm water and reinsert right away.

- Do not use diaphragms or female condoms when using the NuvaRing®. Consult your healthcare provider before using any vaginal products.

What side effects should I expect while using the vaginal contraceptive ring?

- Here are some of the more common side effects of the vaginal contraceptive ring. Usually these side effects will disappear within the first few months of use. If they do not go away or become bothersome, talk to your healthcare provider.
 - Vaginal discomfort
 - Nausea
 - Water retention/weight gain
 - Breakthrough bleeding (spotting)
 - Headache
 - Mood changes
 - Breast tenderness
 - Acne
- Some of the less common side effects include an increased risk of blood clots, but this is very rare. This risk is the highest when you first start the vaginal contraceptive ring, or when you restart after not using it for more than a month. Talk to your healthcare provider immediately if you experience any of the following:
 - Pain in legs or chest
 - Swelling in legs or arms
 - Numbness in legs or arms
 - Sudden loss or change in vision
 - Severe headache
 - Unexplained shortness of breath

What should I do if the ring breaks and/or slips out of my vagina?

- If the ring breaks and slips out of your vagina, throw the broken ring in your household trash and insert a new ring right away.
- The ring can also slip out from your vagina without breaking during intercourse or a bowel movement.
 - If it has been out of your vagina for **less than 3 hours**, rinse with lukewarm water and reinsert it right away.
 - If it has been out of your vagina for **more than 3 hours**, contact your healthcare provider for further instructions.
- If you forget to insert a new ring when you are supposed to, contact your healthcare provider for instructions. You may also visit www.sexandu.ca/sos/ for more information.

How should I store and discard the vaginal contraceptive ring?

- The NuvaRing® can be stored at room temperature for up to 4 months.
- Place the used ring in the foil pouch and discard in household trash out of reach of children and pets, as it may still contain hormones. Do not flush it down the toilet.

How can I protect myself from sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?

- The vaginal contraceptive ring does not protect you from STIs.
- The only way to prevent the transmission of STIs is by using condoms each time you have intercourse.

Notes:

This material is for informational purposes only. It does not replace the advice or counsel of a doctor or health care provider. Please consult with your doctor, pharmacist or other health care provider for further information.