

## What is it?

The Ring is a small, flexible plastic ring — about 2 inches wide — that you place in your vagina each month to prevent pregnancy.

**FACT: The Ring is a new once-a-month method of birth control.**

## How the Ring Works

The Ring contains hormones just like the ones in most birth control pills. It releases these hormones into your body through your vagina. Instead of taking a pill every day, you put in a new ring each month.

## Getting Started with the Ring

To get the most positive, worry-free start with the Ring, take some time to learn about it now:

- Most women start the Ring during their period, but your health provider will tell you the best time to start based on your cycle.
- Pick a **day of the week** that you think will be easy for you to remember, and write it down. Put in your first ring on that day.
- After using the ring for 3 weeks, take it out on the **same day of the week** that you put it in. For example, if you insert your ring on a Sunday, you need to take it out **3 weeks later** on a Sunday. The exact time of day isn't important.
- You now have a Ring Free Week without a ring. You will get your period during this time.
- Put a new ring in exactly **1 week** after you took the old one out, even if you are still bleeding. For example, if you took the old ring out on a Sunday, **1 week later** you put the new ring in on a Sunday.
- During your first month with the Ring, use a back-up method like condoms for the first **7 days**.

## How to Insert the Ring

There is no wrong way to insert the Ring! Most women find it as easy to put in as a tampon. Follow these simple steps:

- Take the ring out of its foil packet. Don't throw away the packet — you'll need it later on.
- Stand, sit or squat like you would to put in a tampon.
- Use your fingers to squeeze the sides of the ring together. The ring is flexible, so this is easy to do.
- Slide the folded ring into your vagina, until it feels comfortable to you.
- Leave the ring in for **3 weeks**.

**REMEMBER: There is no wrong way to insert the Ring! It will work in any position in your vagina. What's important is that it feels comfortable to you.**

## How to Remove the Ring

When it's time to remove the ring, just follow these easy steps:

- Insert your finger into your vagina and gently feel around for the ring.
- When you feel it, hook your finger under the ring and **pull down**. The ring will come out easily.
- Put the used ring into the foil packet you saved. Throw it in the trash, **not** the toilet. The used ring still has some hormones in it, so make sure it is out of reach of children and pets.
- After your Ring Free Week, put in a new ring.
- Never go more than 7 days without a ring!

**"I like the Ring because I only have to think about it once a month. It's basically a once-a-month birth control."**

**— Rashida, age 21  
no children**

## What to Expect: Common Side Effects

You may have side effects with the Ring. Usually, these side effects will go away after 2-6 months, as your body gets used to the Ring. Some common side effects are:

- bleeding between periods
- nausea (very rarely, throwing up)
- headache
- weight gain or loss
- changes in mood
- more wetness in your vagina

If you feel that these side effects are becoming a problem for you, **don't** stop using the Ring! Call your health provider or clinic **first**.

## If a Ring Slips Out

Very rarely, a ring can slip out of your vagina. The instructions below will help you when this happens. If you're ever unsure about what to do, call your health provider or clinic.

If the ring has been out for **less than 3 hours**:

- Rinse it in cool-to-lukewarm (**not** hot) water
- Re-insert it as soon as possible
- You are still protected from pregnancy

If the ring has been out for **more than 3 hours**:

- Rinse it in cool-to-lukewarm water
- Re-insert it as soon as possible
- Use a back-up method like condoms for the next **7 days**

**Note:** If the ring slipped out and you can't find it, you will need to insert a **new** ring.

**EC: Don't forget about Emergency Contraception (EC)! If you've left your ring out for more than 24 hours and you have unprotected sex, EC can help prevent you from getting pregnant.**

## Benefits of Using the Ring

More and more women are choosing the Ring because it is safe, easy to use, and effective. Here are some of the reasons why women today choose the Ring:

- Effective (just as effective as the Pill)
- No daily pills to take — just put in a new ring each month
- Regular, lighter, and shorter periods
- Very low dose of hormones
- Private — no one else needs to know it's there
- You can use the Ring to skip periods — talk to your health provider about this option

**FACT: The Ring is 99% effective at preventing pregnancy.**

## Some Disadvantages: What You Should Know

While the Ring is a popular choice for some women, it isn't the best choice for everyone. The list below will help you to understand why the Ring may not be the best choice for some women:

- The Ring does **not** protect you from HIV or other sexually transmitted infections (STDs). You need to use a **condom** if you think you need protection.
- You have to remember to put in a ring each month, and take it out for the Ring Free Week.
- You need to feel comfortable touching your vagina to put in and take out the Ring each month.

## What to Do if You Have a Problem

The Ring is one of the **safest** birth control methods you can choose. Serious problems happen rarely. The most serious problem is the possibility of blood clots. This usually starts with warning signs. Know these signs, and contact your health provider, clinic, or emergency room if you have any of the following:

- Severe pain in your belly
- Severe chest pain or shortness of breath
- Severe pain or redness and swelling in your leg
- Severe headaches
- Eye problems, such as blurry vision, flashing lights or blindness

## Effectiveness

The Ring is **just as effective** as the Pill. If 100 women used the Ring correctly for a year, only 1 of them would get pregnant.

## Pregnancy and the Ring

Your ability to get pregnant will return soon after you stop using the Ring. If you know you don't want to be pregnant, start using another birth control method! If you do want to get pregnant, start taking vitamins with folic acid — it's one of the best things you can do for your future child.

**FACT: Using the Ring will not affect your future ability to have children.**

## Common Questions

### How do I know that I put the ring in correctly?

If the ring is in your vagina and it feels comfortable to you, then you put it in correctly. The Ring will work in **any position** in your vagina, so what's important is that it feels comfortable to **you**.

### Can a ring get lost inside me?

No. You can't push the Ring farther than the back of your vagina. Your body will block it from going any further.

### Will my partner or I feel the Ring?

Because the Ring is so small and soft, most women don't feel it at all. If you do feel it, try pushing it a little further into your vagina. Some men can feel the Ring during sex, but it usually doesn't bother them.

### Am I still protected from pregnancy during the Ring Free Week?

Yes! Your Ring Free Week allows your body to have a period, but you are still protected from pregnancy during this time.

### What if I forget to put a new ring in?

If you forget to put a new ring in, you could get pregnant. Put a new ring in as soon as you remember, and use a back-up method like condoms for the next **7 days**.

### What if I leave a ring in for too long?

If you leave a ring in for **more than 1 month**, you could get pregnant. Contact your health provider or clinic right away, and use a back-up method like condoms until your appointment.

## To learn more about other reversible birth control methods:

### Check out our brochures on:

The Pill  
Depo Provera ("The Shot")  
Emergency Contraception ("EC")  
Condoms  
The IUD  
The Patch

### Check out our website at:

[www.metrokc.gov/health/famplan](http://www.metrokc.gov/health/famplan)

## To find a Family Planning Provider near you:

Call the Family Planning Hotline  
1-800-770-4334 **OR** TTY 1-800-848-5429  
For confidential information and referrals

## To prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex, or after your birth control method fails:

Call the Emergency Contraception Hotline:  
1-888-NOT-2-LATE (1-888-668-2528)  
or check out the Emergency Contraception website:  
**[www.not-2-late.com](http://www.not-2-late.com)** to find a clinic or pharmacy near you.



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