

Vaginal Ring Fact Sheet

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SOURCES:

Office on Women's Health

- ❖ [Girlshealth.gov: Types of Birth Control](#)
- ❖ [Birth Control Methods: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- ❖ [Unintended Pregnancy Prevention: Contraception](#)

Food and Drug Administration

- ❖ [Birth Control Guide](#)

How do I get it?

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

To search for a family planning clinic near you, go to <http://www.opaclearinghouse.org/search/>.



What is the vaginal contraceptive ring?

The vaginal contraceptive 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 released into the vagina and prevent pregnancy by keeping the ovaries from releasing eggs. The hormones also work by causing the cervical mucus to thicken, which blocks sperm from meeting with and fertilizing an egg.



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 (the exact position inside the vagina is not important). Use back-up birth control (like a condom) for the first seven days after you insert the vaginal ring.

It is important to pay attention and 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 week the vaginal ring is out. After the off week, just start over and put a fresh ring in for three weeks.

You can leave the ring in place while having sex. If the ring falls out for any reason and you are not able to put it back within three hours, another birth control method will be needed until the ring has been in place for seven days.



How effective is it?

Of 100 women who use this method each year, about five are likely to 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). It may also not work as well for women who take certain medicines or the supplement St. John's Wort.

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



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)
- ❖ Requires a clinic visit and prescription
- ❖ Certain antibiotics and supplements (such as St. John's Wort) may make the vaginal ring less effective
- ❖ It may take a month or two after stopping the ring before normal periods return
- ❖ Some women experience vaginal discharge or swelling. Others may have breast tenderness
- ❖ There is a **very slight** increased risk of blood clots, heart attacks, toxic shock syndrome, and strokes
- ❖ Discuss your medical history with your health care provider before using the ring and let them know if you develop any side effects



Quick Facts

Effectiveness in Preventing Pregnancy

- ❖ Of 100 women who use this method each year, about five are likely to get pregnant
- ❖ The risk is smaller in women who use the ring correctly

Use

- ❖ You put on a new ring in the vagina for three weeks



- ❖ During the fourth week, you remove the ring and your period will probably begin

STI Protection

- ❖ No

Clinic Visit Required

- ❖ Yes, prescriptions are required to purchase the vaginal ring

