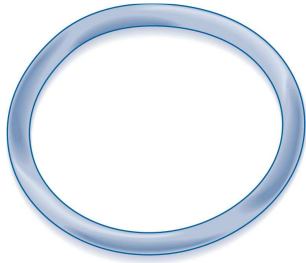


VAGINAL CONTRACEPTIVE RING

What is it?

The vaginal contraceptive ring is a flexible ring that slowly releases low dose hormones (estrogen and progesterone). These hormones are slowly absorbed through the vaginal lining into the bloodstream.

One ring is inserted in the vagina for 21 days, then taken out for 7 days. You need a prescription from a health care professional.



How does the ring work?

The ring works the same as birth control pills. The hormones stop ovulation (the release of an egg) and thicken the mucus in the cervix to stop the sperm.

The ring is 92-99.7% effective in preventing pregnancy when used correctly.

When you buy the ring, it will come from the fridge. There is no need to put the rings back in the fridge when you get home. All rings must be used within 3 months.

How do you use the ring?

Your health care provider will discuss with you when to start the ring, either the first day of your period, a Sunday or any day of the week.

To use the ring for the first time:

- Hold the ring between your thumb and finger, squeeze it together. Push the folded ring gently into the vagina as high as you can push it.
- Leave the ring in for 3 weeks.
- Take the ring out on the 4th week. This week you will have your period.

Inserting the ring is like inserting a tampon. You can either lie down, stand with one foot propped on something (e.g. toilet) or squat.

You must use a back up method of birth control, such as condoms, for the next 7 days, no matter what day of your cycle you start the ring.

The exact position of the ring in the vagina is not important for it to work. Most women do not feel the ring once it is in. If it does feel uncomfortable, the ring may need to be pushed a little further into the vagina. It cannot be pushed too far, as the cervix (narrow, lower end of the uterus) blocks the ring from going further into your body. Some partners say they can feel the ring, but most are not bothered by it.

Do not flush rings down the toilet. Wrap it in tissue and put it in the garbage.

Can it fall out?

It is rare for the ring to slip out of the vagina, but it can come out accidentally if not inserted all the way, while taking out a tampon, during sex or straining to have a bowel movement. If the ring does come out, just rinse it with lukewarm water and put it back in the vagina as soon as possible. If the ring is out longer than 3 hours, a back up method of birth control should be used until the ring has been in place for the next seven days.

Read and follow the instructions that come with the package carefully.

If you have made any mistakes using the ring, you may be able to take the emergency contraceptive pill (ECP) within 3 days to help prevent pregnancy.

Are there other benefits to using the ring?

Other benefits can include:

- regular periods that are lighter and/or shorter
- less cramping
- less acne
- reduced risk of cancer of the ovaries and endometrium

When should a back up method of birth control be used?

You should use a back up method such as condoms for 7 days when:

- starting the ring
- switching from the birth control injection (Depo-Provera) to the ring and you are more than the 13th week from your last needle
- taking prescribed or over-the-counter medications, street drugs or herbal remedies/supplements. Check with your health care provider.

Are there side effects?

Some women may have some side effects such as:

- stomach upset or nausea
- headache
- sore breasts
- changes in weight (weight gain, bloating due to water retention or weight loss)
- mood swings
- less interest in sex
- bleeding between periods (break through bleeding)
- vaginal irritation
- increased vaginal discharge

If you use the ring, you should not smoke. Women who use the ring and smoke have a higher chance of developing a blood clot, however it is extremely rare.

Signs of a blood clot include:

- severe abdominal or chest pain
 - severe cough or shortness of breath
 - severe headache
 - dizziness
 - eye problems such as vision loss or blurring
 - speech problems such as slurring
 - severe leg pain in calf or thigh
 - weakness or numbness, especially if one sided
- If you have any of these signs, take out the ring and go to a hospital right away.

Use condoms every time to help prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV and hepatitis B.
Condoms are free at Healthy Sexuality Clinics.

**For more information call
Peel Public Health 905-799-7700
and ask for Sexual Health Information
or visit**

**intheknowpeel.ca peelsexualhealth.ca
peelregion.ca/health sexualityandu.ca**

**or to help you stay on schedule
<http://www.sexualityandu.ca/games-and-apps/s-o-s-stay-on-schedulelityandu.ca>**