

THE VAGINAL CONTRACEPTIVE RING

WHAT IS A VAGINAL CONTRACEPTIVE RING (NUVARING)?

The vaginal contraceptive ring, NuvaRing®, is a hormonal method of birth control made of soft, flexible, clear plastic. The ring is inserted into a vagina where it slowly releases hormones for three weeks to prevent pregnancy.

HOW IT WORKS

- Prevents the egg from being fertilized by sperm
- Changes the lining of the uterus to prevent implantation
- Decreases the sperm's ability to get through the cervical mucus

NuvaRing contains two hormones (estrogen and progestin), which synthetic versions of hormones produced by the body. These hormones are slowly released from the ring and are absorbed through the wall of the vagina into the bloodstream.

EFFECTIVENESS

The vaginal ring is 98 per cent to 99 per cent effective at preventing pregnancy. For every 100 women who use the ring for one year, according to instructions, approximately one to two women will get pregnant.

The vaginal ring may not work as effectively if you are taking certain medications such as antibiotics or seizure medication. Always check with the pharmacist or your health care provider if you are taking other medications. You should use an additional method of birth control during these times and for one week after you finish your medication.

ADVANTAGES

- 98 to 99 per cent effective against pregnancy if used properly
- Periods may be lighter, shorter, and more regular
- Acne may improve
- Highly effective, reversible, and safe
- May reduce menstrual flow and cramps
- Regulates menstrual cycle
- Decreases premenstrual symptoms
- Reduces the risks of endometrial, ovarian and colon cancers
- Reduces the risk of fibroids and ovarian cysts
- Does not have to be remembered each day

A Vaginal Ring does not protect you from STI's. Always use a condom from beginning to end of all sexual contact to reduce your risk.

DISADVANTAGES

- In the first three months, you may experience spotting or bleeding between periods, headaches, breast tenderness, increased vaginal discharge or irritation, and nausea
- You or your partner may be able to feel the ring. It is ok to take the ring out during intercourse as long as it is not out for longer than three hours
- The ring may slip out when removing a tampon, having a bowel movement, or straining
- It must be prescribed by a health care provider
- May cause vaginal irritation, discomfort, or discharge
- Requires remembering to change the ring once per month

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

- Store the ring at room temperature prior to insertion
- Do not store in direct sunlight or at temperature higher than 30°C
- Do not use NuvaRing past the expiry date on the package
- NuvaRing must be inserted within 4 months of purchasing at the pharmacy or sexual health clinic
- A tampon can be used at the same time as the ring if you have any spotting or bleeding
- Keep out of reach of children or pets

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS

A very small number of women may experience serious problems such as a blood clot. You have an increased risk of these problems if you are a use nicotine, have high blood pressure or are over 40 years of age.

Early warning signs of a blood clot include:

- Severe abdominal pain
- Severe chest pain or shortness of breath
- Severe headaches, dizziness, weakness, numbness
- Eye problems (vision loss or blurring), speech problems
- Severe leg pain (calf or thigh)

If you experience any of the above call 911 or go to nearest emergency department and tell the medical staff you are using the NuvaRing.

IF THE RING SLIPS OUT

Rinse it with cool to lukewarm water and re-insert immediately. You are still protected from pregnancy unless the ring has been out for longer than three hours.

If the ring is out for longer than three hours, you may not be adequately protected from pregnancy. Re - insert the ring as soon as you remember and use an extra method of birth control for seven days if it was out for longer than three hours.

Be sure to read your NuvaRing pamphlet. Call Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653, #1 and speak with a Public Health Nurse for more information, or if you have forgotten to remove or insert the vaginal ring.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- York Region Public Health Sexual Health Clinics **1-800-361-5653, # 1**
- sexandu.ca
- Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada itsaplan.ca