

Contraceptive Vaginal Ring FACT SHEET

The **contraceptive vaginal ring, also known as NuvaRing® or “the ring”**, is a form of monthly birth control; typically the ring is placed in the vagina for three weeks, and then removed for one week. The ring has two naturally-occurring hormones, an estrogen and a progesterone, similar to the oral contraceptive pill. The ring prevents pregnancy by preventing the release of the egg from the ovary, and also by changing the cervical mucus to prevent sperm from reaching the egg.

The ring does not need to be fitted but a prescription is required from your health care provider. For the typical woman using the ring, it is 91% effective at preventing pregnancy (9 pregnancies in 100 women using the ring for a year).

If the ring accidentally falls out, it can be rinsed with lukewarm water and reinserted. If the ring has been out for less than 3 hours, no additional contraception is necessary. If the ring has been out for 3 hours or longer, then an additional contraceptive method is needed for 7 days.

- If you have unprotected intercourse, ask your health care provider about emergency contraception.

The ring does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Condoms are the best way for sexually active people to reduce the risk of infection. Always use a condom to prevent STIs.

Advantages of the ring:

- Decreased pain with periods and/or lighter menstrual periods
- Nothing to do right before sex (to prevent pregnancy)
- May improve PMS (premenstrual syndrome) symptoms
- Can decrease risk of uterine (endometrial) and ovarian cancer
- Ability to become pregnant returns quickly when you stop using the ring

Disadvantages of the ring:

- The ring must be used correctly and not removed from the vagina for more than 3 hours except during the one week out
 - It is possible to shorten or eliminate the “week out” and maintain the effectiveness of the ring
- Side effects – some women experience side effects such as breast tenderness, nausea or change in mood or libido. Most of these symptoms improve with time.
- The ring may interact with certain epilepsy (anti-seizure) or anti-retroviral medications.

Risks of using the ring:

- **Venous thromboembolism** – Very rarely, a blood clot can develop in the veins of the legs or in the lungs. These conditions can be life-threatening. Use of the ring increases the chance of developing a blood clot slightly. The risk of having a blood clot while using the ring is approximately 1 in 500.
- **Stroke or heart attack** – Very rarely, younger women can have a stroke or heart attack. Use of the ring can increase the chance of this happening slightly if you also have other risk factors (such as high blood pressure, smoking or a certain type of migraine headaches).
- **High blood pressure** – The ring can slightly increase your blood pressure. For most women, this increase is small and does not affect your health.

The ring cannot be use by women who:

- Smoke and are 35 years or older
- Have high blood pressure (hypertension)
- Have certain types of migraine headaches
- Have a history of blood clot (DVT or PE), or if you or a family member have certain blood disorders which can increase the risk for a blood clot
- Currently have, or have a history of breast cancer
- Have a history or stroke of heart disease
- Have abnormal vaginal bleeding that has not been evaluated
- Have liver disease
- Have severe diabetes (with eye, nerve or kidney problems)
- Have recently given birth (within 3-6 weeks)

Tell your clinician if you have any of these risk factors or conditions, or of any other past or current medical problems or concerns. Your clinician will evaluate your history to help you decide if the ring is the correct choice for you.

Warning signs – Call your healthcare provider right away if you:

- Think you are pregnant
- Have been, or might have been exposed to an STI
- Have unusual pain or swelling in his legs, unusual pain in your chest, or difficulty breathing (go directly to an emergency room)
- Have sudden change in vision, severe headache, weakness, numbness or difficulty speaking (go directly to an emergency room)
- Have new or worsening headaches
- Have depression or change in mood

Regular physical examinations for routine health care, STI and cancer screening are strongly recommended.