

# Vaginal Contraceptive Ring (NuvaRing®)

## What is the vaginal contraceptive ring?

- NuvaRing® is a soft, 5.5 cm (2 in.) clear plastic ring that you put in your vagina to prevent pregnancy.



## How does the ring work?

- The ring has hormones in it that are similar to a woman's natural hormones.
- The hormones are absorbed through the walls of the vagina. They stop your body from releasing an egg. You cannot get pregnant if your body does not release an egg.
- You can put in and take out the ring by yourself. The ring is held in place by the muscles in the wall of your vagina.
- Most women and their partner(s) do not feel the ring.
- Each ring stays in for 3 weeks. The fourth week is hormone-free (no ring in).

## How well does the ring work?

- With perfect use, the ring can prevent pregnancy up to 99 percent of the time.
- There is a higher risk of getting pregnant when the ring is not used properly.

## How do I start the ring?

- See your healthcare provider. You need a prescription for the ring.
- To start using the ring **for the first time**, put it in during the first 5 days of your period.
- The first month you use the ring, use another method of birth control (e.g., condoms) for the first 7 days.

## How do I use the ring?

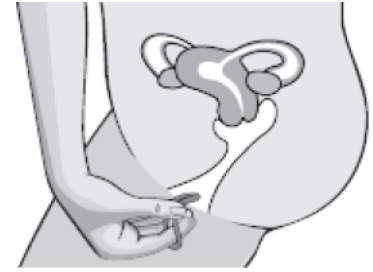
- Leave the ring in for 3 weeks. After 3 weeks, take the ring out and leave it out for 7 days (hormone-free break). Do not leave it out longer than 7 days.
- Your period will start during this break. You cannot get pregnant during the time you are not wearing the ring.
- After the hormone-free break, put a **new ring** in (next ring cycle), **even if your period has not ended**. As soon as you put a new ring in, you are protected from pregnancy.

## How do I store the ring?

- You can store the ring for up to 4 months at room temperature.
- Use before the expiry date on the box.
- Do not store in direct sunlight or at a temperature higher than 30 °C.

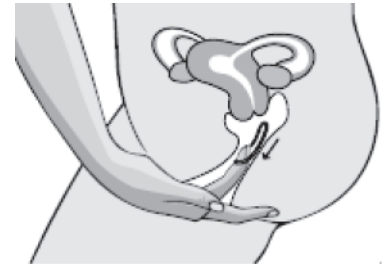
### How do I put the ring in?

1. Wash your hands before and after you put in the ring.
  2. Find a comfortable position, similar to putting a tampon in (e.g., standing with one foot up on a chair, sitting with your knees apart, or squatting down).
  3. Squeeze the ring between your thumb and your pointer finger. Gently push the folded ring into your vagina.
- The position of the ring does not affect how the hormones get into your body. The higher up you put the ring, the more comfortable it will be. It will also be less likely to fall out.
  - If it is not comfortable, the ring might not be up far enough. Use your pointer finger to push it up further.
  - There is no danger of the ring “getting lost” or being pushed in too far.



### How do I take out the ring?

1. Hook your pointer finger under the rim and pull the ring down and out of your body.
2. Throw the ring into the garbage. Do not flush it down the toilet.



If You Forget to Change The Ring			
After 7-day break	After 21 days	After 28 days	After 35 days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put in a new ring right away.</li> <li>• Your new change day is the day the new ring is put in.</li> <li>• Use an extra form of birth control (e.g., condoms) for 7 days.</li> <li>• If you have had unprotected sex in the last 5 days or the extra form of birth control fails (e.g., condom breaks), think about getting emergency contraception to help prevent pregnancy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the ring has been in for 22–27 days, take it out.</li> <li>• Take the hormone-free break and then put in a new ring.</li> <li>• You are still protected from pregnancy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the ring has been in for 28–35 days, take it out.</li> <li>• Put in a new one right away. <b>Do not take the hormone-free break.</b></li> <li>• Leave the ring in for 3 weeks.</li> <li>• You are still protected from pregnancy.</li> <li>• You might have spotting or miss your period this month. <b>Do not take out the new ring.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the ring has been in for more than 35 days, take it out.</li> <li>• Put in a new one right away. <b>Do not take the hormone-free break.</b></li> <li>• Leave the ring in for 3 weeks.</li> <li>• Use an extra form of birth control (e.g., condoms) for 7 days.</li> <li>• You might have spotting or miss your period this month. <b>Do not take out the new ring.</b></li> <li>• If you have had unprotected sex in the last 5 days or the extra form of birth control fails (e.g., condom breaks), think about getting emergency contraception to help prevent pregnancy.</li> </ul>

### What if the ring falls out?

- The ring can fall out when you are taking out a tampon, having sex, or having a bowel movement.
- If the ring falls out **any time**, and it has been **less than 3 hours**:
  - Rinse the ring with warm (not hot) water and put it back in right away.
  - You are still protected from pregnancy.
- If the ring is out for **longer than 3 continuous hours**, follow the instructions below.

First Week of Use	Second or Third Week of Use	
Ring out <b>longer than 3 hours</b> (or not sure how long)	Ring out <b>3–72 hours</b>	Ring out <b>more than 72 hours</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rinse it with warm (not hot) water and put it back in right away.</li> <li>• Once the ring is put in, leave it in for 3 weeks.</li> <li>• Use an extra form of birth control (e.g., condoms) until the ring has been in for 7 days.</li> <li>• If you have had unprotected sex in the last 5 days, or the extra form of birth control fails (e.g., condom breaks), think about getting emergency contraception to help prevent pregnancy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rinse it with warm (not hot) water and put it back in right away.</li> <li>• Keep the ring in until the next scheduled ring change day.</li> <li>• On the change day, take out the old ring and put in a new one right away. <b>Do not take the hormone-free break.</b></li> <li>• Leave the new ring in for 3 weeks.</li> <li>• You might have some spotting or miss your period this month. <b>Do not take out the ring.</b></li> <li>• You are still protected from pregnancy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rinse it with warm (not hot) water and put it back in right away.</li> <li>• Keep the ring in until the next scheduled ring change day.</li> <li>• On the change day, take out the old ring and put in a new one right away. <b>Do not take the hormone-free break.</b></li> <li>• Leave the new ring in for 3 weeks.</li> <li>• You might have some spotting or miss your period this month. <b>Do not take out the ring.</b></li> <li>• Use an extra form of birth control (e.g., condoms) until the ring has been in for 7 days.</li> <li>• If you have had unprotected sex in the last 5 days, or the extra form of birth control fails (e.g., condom breaks), think about getting emergency contraception to help prevent pregnancy.</li> </ul>

### What are the side effects of the ring?

- There is a chance (especially in the first 3 months) that you might have:
  - spotting or bleeding
  - a headache
  - tender breasts
  - feeling moody
  - a bloated stomach
  - feeling sick to your stomach
  - slight weight gain or loss
  - more vaginal discharge or irritation

If you have any of these side effects, **do not stop using the ring**. Talk to your healthcare provider. Most of the side effects get better after 3 months.

## Can the ring cause blood clots?

- In rare cases, women using the ring can develop a blood clot. The risk is higher if you:
  - smoke
  - have a family history of blood clots
  - have had a blood clot, heart attack, or stroke

## See your doctor right away or go to the nearest emergency room if you have:

- bad leg pain
- a bad headache
- eye problems (e.g., blurry vision or loss of vision)
- trouble breathing
- bad pain in your abdomen
- bad chest pain
- numbness in your arms or legs

## What other things do I need to remember?

- Your period might be more regular, lighter, or shorter with less cramping.
- You can use a tampon when you have the ring in.
- Some medications can affect how the ring works. **Ask your pharmacist about medications (prescriptions or over-the-counter) you are taking.**
- The ring protects you from certain types of cancer (ovary and uterus).
- The ring does not protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STI).
- Do not use the ring if you are pregnant or think you might be.
- You can get pregnant if you do not use the ring properly.
- The ring does not have latex in it.

*\*amended with permission from Alberta Health and Wellness SX0041 Jan 2006*

## Sexual Decision Making

- Choose to have sex or not—you have the right to make that decision.
- Choose to protect yourself from getting pregnant and STI.
- Use a condom every time you have sex to lower your risk of STI.
- Talk with your partner about these choices before you have sex.

## For More Information Call:

### Sexual and Reproductive Health

Education/Health Promotion                      403-955-6515

### Clinical Services

Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre	5 <sup>th</sup> floor, 1213–4 <sup>th</sup> St SW	403-955-6500
South Calgary Health Centre	31 Sunpark Plaza SE	403-943-9510
Sunridge Professional Building	406, 2675–36 <sup>th</sup> St NE	403-944-7666

## Website

[www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/programs/sexualhealth](http://www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/programs/sexualhealth)

For 24-hour nurse advice and health information, call Health Link Alberta at 403-943-LINK (5465) in the Calgary area or 1-866-408-LINK (5465) toll-free.