

#### What is the vaginal ring?

The vaginal ring is a small, flexible ring that you put into your vagina once a month to prevent pregnancy. The ring is easy to put in and one size fits most women. The ring contains hormones called estrogen and progestin. These are the same hormones that are in most birth control pills.

#### How effective is the vaginal ring?

If always used correctly, less than 1 out of 100 women will get pregnant each year using the ring. If not always used correctly, 8 out of 100 women will get pregnant each year using the ring.

When you first start using the ring, it takes several days to begin working. Be sure to use backup birth control (like a condom) for the first seven days.

#### How does it work?

The hormones in the vaginal ring keep your ovaries from releasing eggs and thicken your cervical mucus to block sperm from getting into the uterus.

Insert the ring into your vagina. The ring stays in place for three weeks straight. You take it out the fourth week and you have your period. After the week off, you simply insert a new ring and start the cycle again.

If you want to, you can skip the one week break and keep the ring in for four weeks straight. This will eventually make your period very light or disappear totally. This is called continuous-use contraception. If you are interested in this option, talk to your health care provider.

The ring can sometimes fall out of the vagina when removing a tampon, going to the bathroom, or having sex. Most women wear the ring during sex with no problems and without their partners feeling it. If the ring falls out or you remove it, rinse it with warm water and put it back in within three hours.

#### What are the benefits of using the vaginal ring?

- The vaginal ring is safe, convenient, and very effective.
- If you use the ring, you don't have to think about birth control every day or every time you have sex.
- Many women who use the ring have lighter, shorter, and more regular periods.
- Most women can get pregnant quickly after they stop using the ring.
- The hormones in the ring offer health benefits. The ring can offer some protection against acne, non-cancerous breast growths, ectopic pregnancy, endometrial and ovarian cancers, iron deficiency anemia, ovarian cysts, pelvic inflammatory disease, PMS symptoms, and menstrually-related migraine headaches.

## What are the downsides of using the vaginal ring?

- The vaginal ring does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- Getting the ring requires a visit to a health care provider for a prescription.
- Some women may have side effects while using the ring. Some of the most common side effects usually go away after two or three months. They include bleeding between periods, breast tenderness, and nausea and vomiting. The ring may also increase vaginal discharge.
- It can be challenging to remember to remove the ring after three weeks and then insert a new ring after the one-week break. To help you remember, you may want to set the alarm on your cell phone and mark the “change date” on your calendar.
- Women with certain health conditions should not use the ring. Your healthcare provider will help you decide if the ring is right for you.
- Certain drugs may interact with the ring to make it less effective in preventing pregnancy. Talk with your health care provider about any over the counter or prescription medications you are taking

## Where can I get the vaginal ring?

Your health care provider will show you how to insert and remove the ring and give you a prescription for monthly refills. You can purchase the ring at a drugstore, health center, or clinic with a prescription.

## Where can I get more information?

For more information on the vaginal ring, talk to your health care provider.

Compare the ring to other birth control options using ARHP’s Method Match at [www.arhp.org/MethodMatch](http://www.arhp.org/MethodMatch).