

# Vaginal ring

The vaginal ring is a soft, flexible ring, about 2 inches across that you place in your vagina. The ring releases a steady flow of 2 hormones (estrogen and progestin). It prevents pregnancy by stopping the release of an egg. It also thickens the cervical mucus (liquid at the uterine opening) to stop sperm from reaching the egg.

## Effectiveness

- Less than 1 out of 100 people will get pregnant each year if they always use the ring the right way.
- About 9 out of 100 people will get pregnant each year if they don't always use the ring the right way.

## Advantages

- The ring is easy to use and works well when used the right way.
- May have fewer side effects than other hormonal birth control methods.
- Your periods may become more regular, lighter, and less painful.
- You can start using the ring at any time during your cycle, as long as you are not pregnant.
- It can help with acne.

## Disadvantages

- Some people may feel the inserted ring, but most do not.
- If ring falls out or is removed for more than 48 hours during the 3 weeks of active use, insert the ring as soon as possible and use a backup birth control method for 7 days to prevent pregnancy.
- Does not protect against STIs/HIV.

People who are 18 or older may receive their vaginal ring at a participating pharmacy. Long-acting reversible contraceptives, such as IUDs or the implant, are 99% effective at preventing pregnancy. These birth control methods can prevent pregnancy for up to 10 years. Talk to your provider or pharmacist to decide if one of these methods may be right for you. Routine medical care and health screenings are important for early detection and prevention of health issues.

**The vaginal ring is inserted high into the vagina, near the cervix, and left in place for 3 weeks.**

Your period usually starts 2 or 3 days after the ring is removed during the 4<sup>th</sup> week. It's ok if you are still on your period when it's time to put the next ring in.

## You may not have any side effects from the ring.

However, people may experience:

- Headaches
- Cramps
- Sore breasts
- Vaginal discharge
- Nausea
- Irregular bleeding

**Side effects should go away in 2-3 months**

You should not use the ring if you are pregnant, or:

- Have breast cancer right now.
- Have ever had a heart attack, stroke, blood clot, or clotting problems.
- Have liver disease or liver tumors.
- Have migraine headaches with aura.
- Have high blood pressure.
- Have a heart condition.
- Smoke 15 or more cigarettes a day and are 35 or older.
- Have ever had a complex organ transplant.