The Vaginal Ring

The Vaginal Ring is a simple, safe and effective way to prevent pregnancy. Wear one ring a month and you are protected against unintended pregnancy. The ring uses hormones to prevent ovulation and thicken your cervical mucus lining. Once you stop using the ring, you will return to fertility—the ring has no effect on your ability to get pregnant in the future.

While using the ring, women may experience side effects, both positive and negative. In the first two to three months of use, some women experience nausea, bleeding between periods, weight change, and/or breast tenderness or swelling. These problems are common and often go away after the first few months. If they do not, reach out to your medical provider to find a birth control method that is right for you. Many women also report feeling positive side effects throughout their duration of use. Periods often become very predictable, coming in the fourth week when you are not wearing the ring. Over time, periods become lighter, shorter, and less painful. The ring also lowers your risk of getting cancer of the uterus and ovaries. If you change the ring on time and stick to your schedule, the ring is up to 99% effective at preventing pregnancy. If you miss or delay, the ring is 91-94% effective. No method of birth control is 100% effective.

The ring does not protect against the spread of STIs, so condoms are still recommended. If you stop taking the ring and have unprotected sex, take Emergency Contraception (EC) right away. EC can prevent pregnancy up to five days after unprotected sex. The sooner you take it, the better it works.

How do I use the vaginal ring?
• To insert the ring, wash your hands, squeeze it between your thumb and index finger, and insert like a tampon. The ring will sit against the side of your vaginal wall. The exact position doesn’t really matter, as long as you’re comfortable.
• Leave the ring in for 3 weeks and remove it the 4th week (or as directed by your provider).
• Remove the ring by hooking your finger on the lower edge and pulling. Discard in the trash. Do not flush the ring.
• Most women get their period during the ring-free week.
• Insert a new ring at the end of the 4th week.
• You can store the ring at room temperature up to four months. In the refrigerator, the ring lasts much longer.

How do I start the ring?
• There are two ways to start the ring:
  • Quick Start: Insert the ring as soon as you get the pack.
  • Next period: Insert the ring within the first 5 days of your next period.
• If you insert the ring up to 5 days after the start of your period, you are protected against pregnancy right away. If more than 5 days, use condoms as back-up for the first 7 days.

What if the ring comes out or I forget?
• The ring can be outside of your body for 3 hours and still remain effective at preventing pregnancy. If more than 3 hours, and you had unprotected sex, use condoms for 7 days.
• The ring has enough hormones for 35 days. Therefore, you are still protected for a short window period if you forget to remove the ring at 3 weeks.
• If you completely stop using the ring and have unprotected sex, use Emergency Contraception (EC) right away.

Call your healthcare provider if you experience these RARE symptoms:
• Leg pain, swelling, and redness
• Weakness or numbness on one side of your body
• Bad headache
• Vision problems
• Chest pain and/or unusual shortness of breath

Insurance Information: The vaginal ring is covered at no out-of-pocket expense for students enrolled in an NYU-sponsored student health insurance plan. For all other plans, please consult with your insurance carrier.