

Live Well to

Learn Well

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110 Ho Plaza,

Ithaca, NY

14853-3101

What is the contraceptive ring?

The contraceptive ring is an easy-to-use hormonal contraceptive device available by prescription.

The clear, flexible ring, two inches in diameter, is inserted into the vagina, delivering low levels of synthetic estrogen and progestin into the body. These hormones are absorbed into the bloodstream, keeping the ovaries from releasing eggs and thickening cervical mucus, making it difficult for sperm to enter the uterus.

What types of contraceptive rings are available?

- **NuvaRing:** Each NuvaRing lasts for up to five weeks. Every 3-5 weeks (depending on the ring schedule you choose), remove the ring for 7 days, during which you'll get your period, before inserting a new ring. You can also put in a new ring right away (instead of waiting for 7 days) if you want to safely skip your period. *Used correctly, NuvaRing is 98% effective in preventing pregnancy.*
- **Annovera:** One Annovera ring lasts for one year (13 cycles). After 3 weeks (21 days), remove the ring for 7 days, during which you will typically get your period, before re-inserting the same ring for the next 3 weeks. *Used correctly, Annovera is 97% effective in preventing pregnancy.*

Is the ring right for you?

Advantages

Many people choose the ring because it:

- is easy to use
- provides safe, effective, hormonal contraception
- has lower amounts of estrogen than birth control pills
- may be more convenient to use than other methods (e.g., the pill)
- is easy to insert and to remove
- does not require daily or weekly attention
- maintains regular periods and relieves some menstrual problems (e.g., can shorten periods; reduce the incidence of iron deficiency anemia; minimize cramps and PMS; correct menstrual irregularity/amenorrhea)
- can treat symptoms of endometriosis
- decreases the incidence of ovarian cysts
- lowers the risk of ovarian and endometrial cancer
- can diminish acne
- can be used to lengthen the time between periods, or skip them entirely



The clear, flexible ring is inserted into the vagina, releasing synthetic estrogen and progestin.

Disadvantages

The ring is not right for everyone because:

- the fitting may be uncomfortable for some
- it does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- there may be side effects (e.g. nausea, breast tenderness, moodiness)
- is not an option for those who have contraindications to estrogen
- users must keep track of the number of weeks it is inserted

Side effects

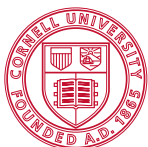
The most frequently reported side effects of the contraceptive ring are those associated with other hormonal methods including nausea and/or vomiting, breast tenderness and moodiness. Side effects of hormonal birth control methods typically lessen over time, and usually resolve completely within three months.

In some users, the contraceptive ring can also cause vaginal irritation or increased vaginal discharge. This often resolves on its own, but may necessitate discontinuation if bothersome.

Serious side effects

It is important to be aware of the very rare but potentially serious complications that may arise as the result of using hormonal contraception, including gall stones and blood clots. The following symptoms should not to be ignored:

- Severe abdominal pain lasting more than 30 minutes
- Severe chest pain or shortness of breath
- Increase in frequency or severity of headaches, especially if associated with weakness, numbness, or vision disturbances
- Loss of vision, double or blurred vision
- Speech problems
- Severe pain in the calf or thighs



Contraindications

Chronic conditions

If you have a chronic medical problem, you will need to discuss the risks of using the contraceptive ring as it relates to your particular situation. Most of the time, it is relatively safe. However, if you have any of the following conditions, check with your medical clinician about your ability to use the ring:

- thrombophlebitis, thromboembolic disorders, cerebral vascular disease, coronary artery disease, lipid disorders or past history of these conditions
- markedly impaired liver function or hepatic adenoma; gallbladder disease
- undiagnosed breast masses or known or suspected carcinoma of the breast
- unexplained vaginal / uterine bleeding
- known or suspected pregnancy
- history of migraine headaches
- history of elevated cholesterol
- elevated blood pressure, stroke, or heart disease
- auto-immune disorder (e.g., Lupus)

Cigarette smoking (if over 35)

Smoking increases the risk of cardiovascular problems from hormonal contraceptive use. This risk increases with age and the amount of smoking. Smoking is considered a contraindication for contraceptive ring use for those over 35 years of age.

How to get a prescription

Make an appointment at Cornell Health by phone (607-255-5155) or by going online to myCornellHealth:

- Schedule a Preventive Care Visit if it is time for a Pap test and/or check-up.
- Schedule a Contraception Appointment if you don't need a check-up, Pap, or STI screening.

How to use the ring

- **First Day:** Start using the ring the first day your normal period begins. This method is effective immediately if used with an on-time period.
- **Quick Start:** Insert the ring and use a back-up method for seven days until the ring is effective.

Note: This fact sheet is not intended to replace the NuvaRing and Annovera package inserts. Please refer to the instructions and information that comes with your contraceptive ring.

Inserting the ring

- Wash and dry your hands and remove the ring from the foil pouch (save pouch for disposal after use).
- Find a comfortable position (squatting, lying down, standing with foot resting on chair, bathtub, or whatever else is comfortable for you).
- Pinch the ring between thumb and index fingers and insert ring into your vagina as high as you can (until your finger reaches your cervix). The muscles of your vaginal wall will hold it in place.
- When in place, it should feel comfortable to wear. (It may or may not surround the cervix and that's okay.) Most do not feel the ring once it is in place. Don't worry about "losing it" or having it go in "too deep."

Removing the ring

Insert your finger into your vagina and "hook" your index finger around the ring. Once you've grasped it, pull it out slowly. It will slide out.

You can expect your menstrual period 2-3 days after the ring is removed.

Troubleshooting

If the ring slips out of your vagina AND...

- *fewer than 3 hours have elapsed:* rinse the ring with cool water and reinsert it. (If you need to insert a new ring during the 3-hour time span, continue as if it were the same ring.)
- *more than 3 hours have elapsed:* reinsert the ring but use a condom as backup protection for the next 7 days.

If you have left your NuvaRing in for longer than five weeks:

- Insert a new NuvaRing and use condoms as backup birth control for the next 7 days. Also if you had vaginal intercourse during the extended time that the NuvaRing was in place and did not use back-up protection (e.g. a condom), you may want to consider using emergency contraception.

If your partner experiences discomfort during vaginal sex:

- The ring can be removed for up to 3 hours without losing contraceptive benefit.

NOTE: The contraceptive ring should *not* be out of the vagina for more than three hours total on any given day.

If you are taking certain medications

Some drugs taken for medical conditions may decrease the effectiveness of your ring. If you are using any of the following drugs, tell your clinician:

- Rifampin
- Griseofulvin
- Phenytoin
- Phenobarbital
- Topiramate
- Carbamazepine
- Antiretrovirals
- St. John's Wort

Inform all health care providers that you use a contraceptive ring, especially if you are in a leg cast or scheduled for surgery. If you have any questions, ask.

Additional considerations

No hormonal method of birth control protects against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. Latex barriers (condoms, latex squares) are the best way to protect against STIs. Always use a latex barrier in addition to the ring if you and/or your partner have had other sexual partners. Condoms, lubricants, and other sexual health products can be purchased at the Cornell Health Pharmacy.

The use of a tampon, spermicide or vaginal yeast product will not alter the contraceptive efficacy of the ring.

The ring can be stored for up to 4 months at room temperature. Avoid placing it in direct sunlight or at temperatures higher than 86 degrees. Storing it in a refrigerator will extend its life.

Unsure if it is right for you?

Consider scheduling an appointment with a sexual health nurse to learn more about the ring and other contraceptive options.

For more information

- plannedparenthood.org/learn/birth-control/birth-control-vaginal-ring-nuvaring
- nuvaring.com
- annovera.com