

# Facts About **The Vaginal Ring (Nuvaring)**

## **What is the vaginal ring?**

The vaginal contraceptive ring (Nuvaring) is a small, flexible, plastic ring that is placed into the vagina to prevent pregnancy.

## **How does the vaginal ring work and does it work well?**

The ring contains the same hormones found in most birth control pills. The hormones stop the ovaries from releasing eggs (ovulation). If no egg is released, you cannot get pregnant. The hormones also cause the cervical mucus to thicken and block sperm from meeting with and fertilizing an egg.

## **How well does it work?**

The ring is 91-94% effective if used the right way.

## **Is there anyone who should not use the vaginal ring?**

You should not use the vaginal ring if:

- You have high blood pressure
- You have ever had a heart attack, stroke or blood clots
- You have ever had breast cancer
- You have unexplained vaginal bleeding
- You have migraines
- You are pregnant
- You have diabetes with kidney, eye, nerve or blood vessel damage
- You have liver disease or liver tumors

Smoking increases your risk of serious side effects. Women who use birth control methods with hormones should not smoke. This includes electronic cigarettes.

## **What are the possible side effects of the vaginal ring?**

Most women can use the ring without having any problems. The most common side effects of the vaginal ring are similar to the birth control pill and include breast tenderness, nausea, headache, vaginal discharge, vaginal irritation and breakthrough bleeding. Serious problems are rare. There is a very slight risk of blood clots, heart attacks, toxic shock syndrome, and strokes.

## **How do I know if I have a problem from using the ring?**

If you have any of the warning signs, call your doctor, nurse or clinic right away:

- Leg pain, swelling and redness
- Weakness or numbness on one side of your body
- Bad headache
- Vision problems
- Chest pain

## **How do you start and use the vaginal ring?**

There are 2 ways to start the ring:

- **Quick Start:** put in your first ring as soon as you get the pack.
- **Next period:** put in your first ring soon after your next period begins.
- If you put your first ring in up to 5 days after the start of your period, you are protected against pregnancy **right away**.
- If you put your first ring in more than 5 days after the start of your period, you should **use condoms as back up for the first 7 days**.

## **How do you use the vaginal ring?**

Squeeze the ring between your thumb and index finger and gently push it into your vagina (the exact position inside the vagina is not important). Use back-up birth control (like a condom) for the first seven days after you insert the vaginal ring.

Leave the ring in place for three weeks (21 days) and then remove it for one week (7 days). Your period will occur during the week the vaginal ring is out. After the off week, just start over and put a new ring in and leave in for three weeks.

Extended cycling of rings:

- Bicycling is using the first ring for three weeks, removing and immediately placing a new ring for three weeks, then removing the ring for cycle on the 7th week.
- Tricycling is using the first ring for three weeks, removing and immediately placing a new ring for three more weeks then removing the ring for cycle on the 10th week.

You can leave the ring in place while having sex. If the ring falls out for any reason and you are not able to put it back within three hours, another birth control method will be needed until the ring has been in place for seven days. You will need to use a back up method such as condoms for 7 days.

## **What if I stopped using the vaginal ring and had unprotected sex?**

Take Emergency Contraception (EC) right away. EC can prevent pregnancy up to 5 days after sex, and it works better the sooner you take it. You can get EC at the pharmacy without a prescription or at your county health department family planning clinic or doctor's office.

## **Where can I get the vaginal ring?**

You need a prescription. You can buy the vaginal ring at your local drug store or get it at the health department clinic.

### **REMEMBER:**

- The vaginal ring does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Protect yourself; use a condom every time you have oral, vaginal or anal sex.
- Certain antibiotics and herbal medications such as St John's wort may make the vaginal ring less effective.