

# Vaginal Ring (NuvaRing)



## What is a vaginal ring?

The vaginal ring is a soft plastic ring that contains two hormones, oestrogen and progestogen. These are similar to the hormones produced by the ovaries and are like those used in the combined oral contraceptive, known as the pill.

In Australia the only type of vaginal ring you can buy is called NuvaRing.

## How does a vaginal ring work?

You put the vaginal ring into your vagina. The vaginal ring releases hormones and these are absorbed through the walls of the vagina. The hormones stop the ovaries from releasing an egg (ovulation) each month and also thicken the mucus around the cervix to keep sperm from getting into the uterus.

## How well does a vaginal ring work?

If used perfectly, the vaginal ring is 99.5% effective at preventing pregnancy. If you forget to put a new ring in, use it incorrectly or take certain medications, it might only be 93% effective.

## Is the vaginal ring right for me?

Most women can safely use a vaginal ring. However there are some cases where it may not be a suitable option.

You should not use a vaginal ring if you:

- have certain types of migraine headaches
- are overweight
- are taking certain types of medication including epileptic medications and certain types of herbal medicine
- are over 35 and smoke
- have had breast cancer
- have had a blood clot in the leg (DVT), stroke or heart attack or
- have severe liver problems or liver cancer.

You may not be able to use a vaginal ring if you:

- are breastfeeding
- have unusual bleeding and the cause is yet to be determined by a doctor
- have high blood pressure problems or heart or liver problems, or
- have a family history of deep vein clot/thrombosis (DVT).

If any of these apply to you, speak to a doctor to find a contraceptive method that is right for you.

## How can I get a vaginal ring?

You will need to make an appointment with your local Family Planning clinic or a GP for an assessment to see if you are suitable to use a vaginal ring.

If a vaginal ring is right for you, you will be given a prescription (script).

When you take your script to the pharmacy, they will provide you with four vaginal rings at a time.

The cost depends on whether you have a Medicare and/or a Concession card. The cost of a NuvaRing can be more expensive than some brands of the pill.

Please note: a medical review is required each year for an ongoing prescription.

## How do I use a vaginal ring?

You'll need to remember to take it out and put one in again at the right time.

The vaginal ring stays in for three weeks. After three weeks you take the ring out. The ring stays out for one week. You will experience a monthly bleed (a withdrawal bleed) in the week when there is no ring in place.

You can choose to skip a period and place a new ring in straight away. This means you will not have a week's break and you will not get a period.

## When should I insert a vaginal ring?

You should insert your first ring on any day in the first five days of your normal cycle (days one to five).

Day one is the first day of your usual period. If you insert it on days one to five, you will be protected against pregnancy immediately.

If inserted later than day five, you will need to avoid sex or use a backup method of contraception, such as condoms, for the next seven days.

## How do I insert a vaginal ring?

To insert the ring, simply squeeze the ring between thumb and index fingers, and push it up inside you until it's sitting up against the side of your vaginal wall.

Putting it in is just the same as using a tampon, but you might find it a little trickier because of its shape. Once it's in, make sure you're comfortable with its position. Most users can't feel the vaginal ring once it is in place.

Your vaginal muscles will keep it in place, even during exercise and sex.

You'll find more information in the Nuva Ring packet.

## How do I remove a vaginal ring?

To remove the vaginal ring, put your finger into your vagina, hook it around the ring and pull it out.

## Advantages of the vaginal ring

- highly effective if used correctly
- fertility returns to normal soon after stopping
- you insert it yourself
- there is a predictable and regular bleeding pattern
- it may improve acne
- there is a decreased chance of getting cancer of the uterus (womb) and ovaries
- periods usually become lighter and less painful
- can be used to skip a period
- can help with symptoms of endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome and
- no need to remember to take a pill every day.

## Are there any side effects?

The vaginal ring is a hormonal contraceptive and side effects may include:

- headaches
- breast tenderness
- skin changes
- nausea or bloating

- mood changes or
- an increase in vaginal discharge.

Please note that side effects often settle with time.

## What could stop the vaginal ring from working?

The vaginal ring may not be effective if:

- you forget to insert your new ring after the seven day break
- you remove it at any other time for longer than 24 hours, or
- you are taking certain medications as they may Interfere with how well the vaginal ring works.

## Forget to insert your ring?

If you forget to insert your new vaginal ring, then you need to put another one in as soon as you remember.

If the ring falls out or has been left out for a period of time:

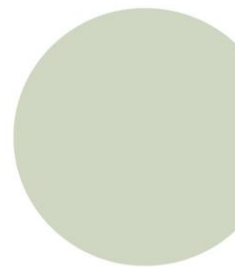
- after rinsing the ring with water, put it back into your vagina immediately,
- if it has been out for less than 24 hours, you will still be protected against pregnancy
- if it has been out for more than 24 hours, put it back in and avoid sex or use a backup method of contraception, such as condoms, for the next seven days
- if the ring has been left out for more than 24 hours during week three, skip the 7 day break and insert a new one immediately.

If you are more than 24 hours late inserting a new ring after the ring free week:

- insert a new ring immediately
- avoid sex or use a backup method of contraception, such as condoms, for the next seven days
- consider using emergency contraception if you have had unprotected sex in the previous five days.

If you forget to take the ring out after three weeks:

- remove your current ring as soon as you remember



- put a new one in on the day you were meant to (even if you don't have a full week's break).

If the ring was left in for more than four weeks:

- remove the current ring and put in a new one immediately
- avoid sex or use another form of contraception (such as condoms) for seven days as you are not protected against pregnancy at this time
- consider using emergency contraception if you have had unprotected sex in the last five days.

## **Do I need emergency contraception if I'm late putting in my ring?**

If you have unprotected sex within five days of being more than 24 hours late to insert a vaginal ring, you may be at risk of pregnancy.

Emergency contraception can be used if you had unprotected sex within the last five days.

Contact a health professional or your local FPT clinic if you are unsure if you need emergency contraception.

For more information, support & advice, visit [www.fpt.asn.au](http://www.fpt.asn.au).



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