

Vaginal Ring (Nuva Ring)

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 available is called the 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 thickens the mucus around the cervix to keep sperm from getting into the uterus.

How can I get a vaginal ring?

Step 1 - Visit a Family Planning Tasmania clinic or GP

Make an appointment with your local Family Planning Tasmania 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).

Step 2 - Visit a pharmacy

When you take your script to the pharmacy, they will provide you with four vaginal rings at a time. The cost of a NuvaRing can be more expensive than some brands of the pill.

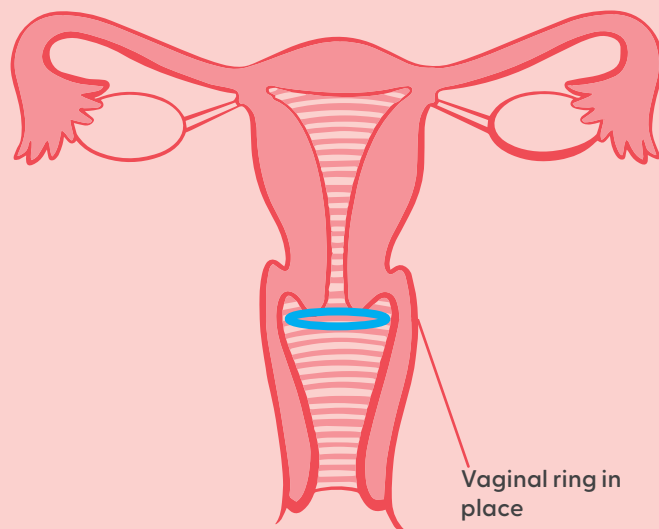
Step 3 - Review yearly

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

How effective is a vaginal ring?

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.



Vaginal ring in place

The NuvaRing





Advantages of a vaginal ring

- Highly effective if used correctly.
- Fertility returns to what is normal for you 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.
- Can be used to skip a period.
- Can help with symptoms of endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome.
- No need to remember to take a pill every day.

Possible 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.

When should I insert a vaginal ring?

You can insert your first ring on any day in your normal cycle.

If you insert it on days one to five of your normal cycle (day one is the first day of your usual period), 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.

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

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 significantly 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
- 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 or heart or liver problems.
- 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.

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For more information, support and advice visit www.fpt.org.au

FPT acknowledges the contribution of FPV in the development of this fact sheet

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