

Where can you get the vaginal ring?

The vaginal ring requires a prescription from a qualified health care provider. Call your local family planning clinic for information.

Vaginal Ring

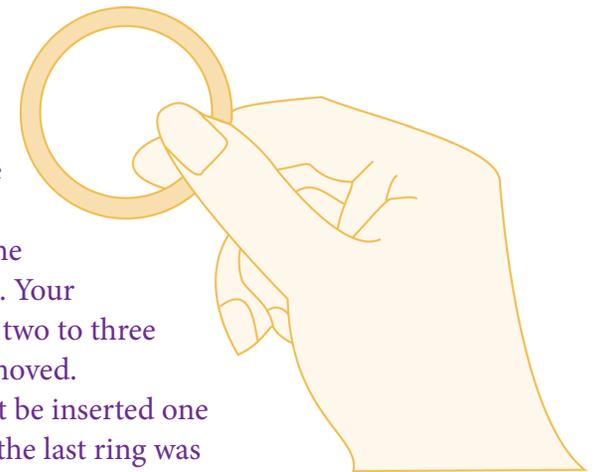
How the vaginal ring works

The vaginal ring is a small (one size fits all), flexible transparent ring (two inches across) that you place in your vagina. It releases a steady flow of low dose hormones (estrogen and progestin). Like birth control pills, this combination of hormones stops your body from releasing an egg, so no egg can be fertilized. The hormones also cause the cervical mucus (liquid at the opening of the uterus) to thicken, which can stop sperm from getting into the uterus.

How to use the vaginal ring

The vaginal ring is a once-a-month method of birth control. The ring is placed in a woman's vagina and left there for 21 days (3 weeks) where it releases a steady flow of hormones. Remove the ring for the fourth week. Your period will usually start two to three days after the ring is removed.

A new vaginal ring must be inserted one week (seven days) after the last ring was removed to continue to prevent pregnancy. Do not reuse a vaginal ring for a second month.



The exact placement of the ring is not important because it does not work as a barrier method of birth control. There is no danger that the vaginal ring will be pushed up too far in the vagina or “lost.” If your ring comes out for some reason, rinse it off and reinsert it. If it comes out for more than three hours, read the instructions or call your health care provider for specific instructions.

Follow the written instructions that come with the vaginal ring.

Effectiveness

The vaginal ring is in the Tier 2 level of effectiveness because preventing pregnancy depends on the user keeping the ring in place and changing it on time (each month). Typically 9 out of 100 women are likely to get pregnant within 1 year of use. If a woman forgets to replace the ring on time her chance of pregnancy goes up.

To increase effectiveness, a woman should keep the vaginal ring in place and change it on time using it consistently and correctly.

Benefits of the vaginal ring

The vaginal ring does not require a health care provider to insert it into the vagina. It is convenient, easy to use, and there is no wrong way to insert it. The ring provides low and steady hormone delivery and is not likely to cause irregular bleeding. It is not made of latex.

Potential side effects and disadvantages

Very few women report side effects. Rarely, side effects can occur and can include vaginal discharge, headaches, nausea, decreased libido and breast symptoms. Ask your health care provider about side effects.

Some women may be aware that the ring is in their vagina, but it should not be felt by the woman or her partner once it is in place. A woman must feel comfortable touching her genitals to put it in place and to take it out.

The vaginal ring will not provide protection against HIV (AIDS) or sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as chlamydia, herpes, genital warts (HPV), gonorrhea, hepatitis B and syphilis.

Potential risks

Risks with the vaginal ring are considered the same as with other combination hormonal birth control. Some women should not use it if they have specific health conditions. Ask your health care provider about potential risks.

Cigarette smoking increases the risk of serious cardiovascular side effects (blood clots, heart attacks, strokes), especially for women over 35. Women who use the vaginal ring are strongly advised not to smoke.