

## What You Should Know About ...

See Glossary section for definitions of underlined words.

# The Vaginal Ring (Nuva Ring)

### What is the vaginal ring?

- The vaginal ring is a small, soft, flexible plastic ring placed into the vagina.
- It contains man-made hormones similar to the natural hormones that already exist in your body.
- The ring slowly releases hormones into the body through the vagina.

### How does the vaginal ring work?

- The vaginal ring prevents your ovaries from releasing an ovum (egg) each month.
- The ring makes the cervical mucus thicker. This makes it harder for sperm to get into the cervix.
- The ring changes the lining of the uterus. The lining gets thinner so it is harder for a fertilized egg to stick to the uterus. So that even if an egg is produced and fertilized, it should not develop.
- The ring prevents pregnancy 92-99% of the time.

### How do I use the vaginal ring?

- The vaginal ring comes in only one size. It fits into the vagina of any woman.
- Insert the vaginal ring on the first day of your menstrual period.
- Use your thumb and index finger to press the sides of the ring together. Gently push the folded ring inside your vagina. You can place it anywhere in your vagina.
- If you insert the ring deep in your vagina, you will be less likely to feel it. This will also reduce the chance of slipping out of your vagina.
- Leave the ring inside your vagina for three weeks. Then remove the ring. You do not need to wear it during the fourth week. You will get your period during this ring-free week.
- Following the ring-free week, insert a new ring to continue protection from pregnancy and start a new cycle. Insert the new ring on the same day and at the same hour each month.

### How soon does the vaginal ring start working?

- If you insert the ring during the first five days of your period, the ring starts working after 7 days.
- Until the ring starts working (7 days) use another method of birth control (condoms and foam).

### Does the vaginal ring protect me from STIs and HIV?

- **No.** Always use a latex or polyurethane male condom or a female condom when you have sex to reduce the risk of getting an STI (sexually transmitted infection) or HIV infection.

### Are there any side effects?

You may feel some minor side effects. If they are very uncomfortable, talk to your health care provider. Minor side effects include:

- bleeding between periods
- breast discomfort
- headaches
- nausea
- vaginal irritation
- vaginal discharge

### **What if the vaginal ring falls out?**

- If the vaginal ring falls out, rinse it with cool or lukewarm water. Put it back into the vagina at once.
- If the ring has been out for more than 3 hours, rinse it and put it back into the vagina. Use another method of birth control (foam and condom) for the next 7 days.

### **What if I forget to take the ring out?**

- If you leave the ring in the vagina for more than 21 days but less than 28 days, remove it and have one week ring-free. Then, insert a new ring.
- If you leave the ring in the vagina for more than 28 days, remove it at once. Insert a new ring. Use another method of birth control (foam and condom) for the next 7 days.

### **What if I forget to insert the vaginal ring after the week off?**

- Insert the ring as soon as you remember. Use another method of birth control (foam and condom) for the next 7 days.

### **What if I miss my period?**

- Contact your health care provider to ask about a pregnancy test.

### **Is the vaginal ring safe for all women to use?**

- No. Ask your health care provider if it is right for you. Tell him/her about any medical problems.
- If you smoke, especially if you are over 35, the vaginal ring may not be right for you.

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

You can get the vaginal ring from:

- your health care provider.
- a teen clinic
- a walk-in clinic
- a community health clinic

### **Where can I get more information?**

- From your health care provider, community health clinic, or public health nurse.
- From the Facts of Life On-Line: e-mail your questions to [thefactsoflife@serc.mb.ca](mailto:thefactsoflife@serc.mb.ca).
- From websites: [www.sexualityandu.ca](http://www.sexualityandu.ca) or [www.serc.mb.ca](http://www.serc.mb.ca).

**If this method fails, and if you don't want to get pregnant, see a health care provider or pharmacist for emergency contraception as soon as you can.**

### **Glossary:**

**Cervical mucous** – The fluid produced by the cervix. The mucous changes at different times of the menstrual cycle. Around the time of ovulation, the mucous is clear and slippery.

**Cervix** – The lower part of the uterus that opens into the vagina. It is also called the “neck of the uterus”.

**Emergency Contraception** – A medication used to avoid pregnancy *after* sex when you didn't use birth control or the birth control didn't work (for example, the condom broke).

**Uterus** – A pear-shaped, hollow organ with muscular walls. The fetus grows in the uterus during pregnancy. The uterus is also called the “womb”.

**Vagina** – The muscular tube inside a woman's body where the menstrual blood comes out from the uterus, where a baby comes out from the uterus during childbirth, and where a penis can go in for vaginal intercourse.