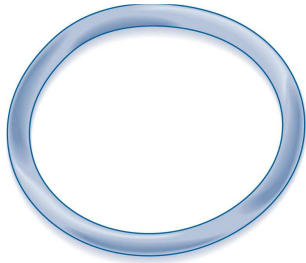


## VAGINAL CONTRACEPTIVE RING

### What is it?

The vaginal contraceptive ring is a flexible ring that slowly releases low dose hormones (estrogen and progesterone). These hormones are slowly absorbed through the vaginal lining into the bloodstream. You will need a prescription from a doctor to obtain the ring. One ring is inserted in the vagina for 21 days, then taken out for 7 days.



### How does the ring work?

The ring works the same as birth control pills. The hormones stop the egg from being released each month (ovulation). The hormones change the mucous in the cervix, making it harder for sperm to enter the uterus.

The ring is 92-99.7% effective in preventing pregnancy when used correctly.

When you buy the ring, it will come from the fridge. You do not need put it in the fridge when you get home, however all rings must be used within 3 months.

### How do you use the ring?

To use the ring for the first time:

- On the first day of bleeding, with your next period, hold the ring between your thumb and finger, squeeze it together. Push the folded ring gently into the vagina as high as you can push it.
- Leave the ring in for 3 weeks.
- Take the ring out on the 4<sup>th</sup> week. This week you will have your period.

Inserting the ring is like inserting a tampon. You can either lie down, stand with one foot propped on something (eg toilet) or squat.

The ring is effective immediately if it is put in on the first day of bleeding.

If you want to start the ring on a day other than the first day of your period, you must use a back up method of birth control, such as condoms, for the next 7 days.

The exact position of the ring in the vagina is not important for it to work. Most women do not feel the ring once it is in. If it does feel uncomfortable, the ring may need to be pushed a little further into the vagina. It cannot be pushed too far, as the cervix (narrow, lower end of the uterus) blocks the ring from going further into your body. Some partners say they can feel the ring, but most are not bothered by it.

Do not flush the ring down the toilet. Wrap it in tissue and put it in the garbage.

### Can it fall out?

It is rare for the ring to slip out of the vagina, but it can come out accidentally if not inserted all the way, while taking a tampon out, during sex or straining to have a bowel movement. (Use of tampons on the effectiveness of the ring has not been decided). If the ring does come out, just rinse it with lukewarm water and put it back in the vagina as soon as possible. If the ring is out longer than 3 hours, a back up method of birth control should be used until the ring has been in place for the next seven days.

*Read and follow the instructions that come with the package carefully.*

If you have made any mistakes using the ring, you may be able to take the emergency contraceptive pill (ECP) to help prevent pregnancy.

### Are there other benefits to using the ring?

Other benefits can include:

- less painful menstrual periods
- less menstrual bleeding

- more regular periods
- less acne
- reduced risk of cancer of the ovaries and cervix

**When should a back up method of birth control be used?**

You should use a back up method such as condoms for 7 days if you:

- start the ring on a day other than the first day of your period
- start the ring more than 24 hours after your period starts
- switch from the birth control injection (Depo-Provera) to the ring and you are more than the 13<sup>th</sup> week from your last needle
- take certain other medications as they can make the ring not work as well. Check with your health care provider

**Are there side effects?**

Some women may have some side effects such as:

- stomach upset or nausea
- headache
- sore breasts
- weight gain/weight loss
- mood swings
- less interest in sex
- bleeding between periods (break through bleeding)
- vaginal irritation
- increased vaginal discharge

If you use the ring, you should not smoke. Women who use the ring and smoke have a slightly higher chance of developing a blood clot however it is extremely rare.

Signs of a blood clot include:

- severe abdominal or chest pain
- severe cough or shortness of breath
- severe headache
- dizziness
- eye problems such as vision loss or blurring
- speech problems such as slurring
- severe leg pain in calf or thigh
- weakness or numbness, especially if one sided

If you have any of these signs, take out the ring and go to a hospital right away.

Remember: Use condoms every time to help prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV and hepatitis B.
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**For more information call  
Peel Public Health 905-799-7700  
and ask for Sexual Health Information  
or visit**

**[intheknowpeel.ca](http://intheknowpeel.ca)                      [peelsexualhealth.ca](http://peelsexualhealth.ca)  
[peelregion.ca/health](http://peelregion.ca/health)**