

**Ottawa County Department of Public Health
Family Planning Program**

Vaginal Contraceptive Ring Patient Information

If you are thinking about starting the vaginal contraceptive ring, or the ring (such as NuvaRing®), there is information you should consider before you decide if it is right for you. Please read all this information as well as the FDA-approved information from the manufacturer that comes with your packaged ring. We are here to help answer any questions you have – please ask!

Vaginal contraceptive rings contain both estrogen and progesterone hormones. The NuvaRing® is a polyethylene vinyl acetate ring that is smaller than the size of a diaphragm. The hormones flow slowly from the ring into your bloodstream. They prevent pregnancy mainly by keeping eggs from being released by the ovaries. For every 100 women who use a contraceptive ring, fewer than 2 will become pregnant the first year with typical use and less than one with perfect use. You must be able to insert a new ring every month for it to be as effective as possible.

Instructions are included in the event you forget to insert a new ring or it was removed too early and then what should be done. Emergency contraception (EC) is available if it is recommended and you want to use it. EC is available over the counter without a prescription if you are 15 or older or you can also call our Family Planning program for it. The sooner you take EC within 5 days from unprotected intercourse the more effective it is at preventing a pregnancy.

Vaginal contraceptive rings do not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS. Using condoms consistently with the pill can lower your risk for STIs.

Besides preventing pregnancy, contraceptive rings have other health benefits, such as:

- Less menstrual bleeding
- Less anemia
- Less chance for a tubal pregnancy
- More protection from ovarian cysts
- More protection from uterine cancer
- Less menstrual cramping
- Less acne (usually)
- More regular menstrual cycling
- More protection from ovarian cancer

Minor side effects to the contraceptive rings may include:

- Nausea, vomiting
- Change in appetite
- Spotting between periods
- Skin pigment changes
- Hair loss or growth
- Breast tenderness
- Change in moods
- Headaches
- Acne (not usually)
- Increased vaginal discharge

Serious side effects are possible with contraceptive ring use, which in rare cases may cause death. Overall, however, using hormonal contraception is safer for you than a pregnancy would be. The serious side effects include:

- Blood clot (most commonly forms in a leg) that can travel to the lungs
- Stroke
- Heart attack
- Liver tumors

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Your risk for a serious side effect increases with certain health conditions. Therefore, you should not use the contraceptive ring if you have had, now have, or develop in the future:

- Clot in a vein causing Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) or Pulmonary Embolism (PE)
- Stroke
- Clotting disorder (example Factor V Leiden, Prothrombin mutation, Lupus Anticoagulant, Protein C, Protein S, and Antithrombin deficiencies)
- Ischemic heart disease (angina)
- Multiple cardiovascular risk factors (older age, nicotine use, diabetes, high blood pressure)
- Nicotine use and 35 years of age or older
- High cholesterol or high triglyceride levels
- Diabetes of 20 years or more
- Diabetes with vascular changes to kidneys, eyes, or extremities
- Liver problems: viral hepatitis, liver tumor, cirrhosis
- Organ transplant with complications
- Breast cancer
- Major surgery with prolonged immobilization (such as confined to bed or casting of an extremity)
- Valvular heart disease
- Heart problems related to pregnancy
- High blood pressure
- Gallbladder disease and having symptoms
- Delivery less than 21 days ago
- Delivery 21-42 days ago with other risk factors for venous thromboembolism (VTE) (examples: age ≥ 35 years, previous VTE, thrombophilia, immobility, transfusion at delivery, BMI ≥ 30 , postpartum hemorrhage, post cesarean delivery, preeclampsia, or nicotine use)
- Delivery 21-30 days ago, breastfeeding, without VTE risk factors
- Lupus with positive (or unknown) antiphospholipid antibodies
- Headaches with vision problems or feeling like the room is spinning
- Headaches with numbness or weakness in the arms or legs
- Migraines and 35 years and older
- Inflammatory bowel disease

Please call the Family Planning program if your health condition or medications have changed since you were last seen to check if it is safe to continue with the ring.

Seek immediate medical care if any of the following occurs:

- sharp or crushing chest pain or coughing blood
- shortness of breath
- unusual swelling or pain in the legs or arms
- sudden severe headaches
- changes in the frequency, severity, or associated symptoms of your headache
- eye problems such as loss of vision
- severe pain in the stomach or abdomen
- yellowing of the skin or eyes
- severe depression
- unusually heavy bleeding from the vagina
- new lump in your breast

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VAGINAL CONTRACEPTIVE RING – INSTRUCTIONS

To start using a vaginal contraceptive ring:

- 1) There are different options on when to start with the ring:
 - a. If you have had no unprotected intercourse in the last 5 days, you can place the contraceptive ring in your vagina today. Use abstinence or a back- up method for the next 7 days.
 - b. If you have had any unprotected intercourse in the last 5 days, you may want to take a hormonal emergency contraceptive now (unless you are within 5 days of the start of your last period, then it's not needed). Then place the first ring in your vagina today or tomorrow. Use abstinence or a back-up method for next 7 days.
 - c. Check a pregnancy test in the first cycle of ring use if you have symptoms of pregnancy or if your period is delayed or abnormal.
 - d. You can also wait to place the first contraceptive ring in your vagina until the first day of your next period. Tampons can be used with the ring, but be sure to check that the ring is not lost whenever a tampon is removed. No back-up method is needed.
- 2) To place the ring in your vagina, squeeze the sides of the ring together and place the ring in the upper part of the vaginal vault. It does not need to be positioned around the cervix.

To continue with a vaginal contraceptive ring:

- 1) If you want a monthly period,
 - a. Place the vaginal ring in your vagina and remove it in 21 days. During the 7 ring-free days, you will have a period.
 - b. You should place a new ring 7 days after you removed the first ring, even if you are still on your period.
- 2) If you want less frequent periods, you can use one ring for 28-30 days and immediately replace it with a new ring.
- 3) You do not need to remove the ring during intercourse or during any treatments for a vaginal infection.
- 4) If you do remove the ring temporarily, store the ring in its foil pouch.
- 5) If the ring is removed from the vagina for more than 3 hours during any 24 hour period, you should practice abstinence or use a back-up method for the next 7 days. Consider emergency contraception if intercourse has occurred with the ring out of the vagina more than 3 hours.
- 6) Do not douche with the vaginal ring.
- 7) When you remove the ring, place it into the original pouch it came in and dispose of it in routine trash. Do not flush the ring down a toilet or press it through a trash compactor.
- 8) It is recommended that you store unused rings in a refrigerator, because rings have a longer shelf life if they are refrigerated. Do not store rings in a freezer.

If your contraceptive ring is expelled or removed for more than 3 hours in any 24 hour period or not removed sooner than 31 days before it is replaced with a new one:

- 1) Replace the ring immediately.
- 2) Use a back-up method for 7 days.
- 3) Consider using emergency contraception if you have had intercourse in the last 5 days.