



NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Family Planning Program

INFORMATION FOR
CONTRACEPTIVE VAGINAL RING

The contraceptive ring contains both estrogen and progestin. The contraceptive ring is 98 percent to 99 percent effective when used correctly.

BENEFITS:

- * Fewer menstrual cramps and bleeding
- * Reduced PMS symptoms
- * Regular periods
- * Less pain at ovulation
- * Improvement in acne
- * May be used for menstrual suppression and/or extended contraception.

DECREASED RISK OF:

- * Ovarian or endometrial cancer
- * Ectopic pregnancy
- * Benign breast tumors or ovarian cysts
- * Anemia

RISKS/SIDE EFFECTS:

- * Vaginal infections and irritation
- * Vaginal discharge/discomfort
- * Spotting between periods
- * Weight change (uncommon)
- * Cardiovascular Complications (including elevated blood pressure)
- * Toxic Shock (Rare)
- * Nausea
- * Breast tenderness
- * Headaches
- * Decreased milk supply (if breastfeeding)
- * Change in libido
- * Mood changes/depression
- * Worse acne

To decrease the chance of serious problems, you need to go to an emergency room, doctor or clinic if you have any of the following symptoms:

- A** Abdominal pain (severe)
- C** Chest pain or shortness of breath
- H** Headaches (severe)
- E** Eye problems — blurred vision, flashing lights or blindness
- S** Severe leg pain (calf or thigh)

ALTERNATIVES: You have received written information about the other methods of birth control. For situations of suspected contraception failure, emergency contraception is available and offers a second chance to reduce the risk of unintended pregnancy.

INSTRUCTIONS: You have received information about the vaginal ring and how to use it. The vaginal ring does not protect against STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) and HIV.

DECISION TO STOP USING: You may stop using the vaginal ring at any time. A woman is most likely to become pregnant if she or her partner does not use a method of birth control.

QUESTIONS: You may ask questions about the ring at any time and may contact the clinic with further questions.



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INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONTRACEPTIVE VAGINAL RING

1. The package insert states that backup must be used during the first seven days that the first ring is in place. If initiated within 5 days of onset of menses, backup method may not be required.
2. The vaginal ring is removed at the end of three weeks of wear; then, after one ring-free week, the woman inserts a new ring. The woman's menstrual period occurs during the ring-free week.
3. Ring removal during intercourse is not recommended; however, women who want to remove it during intercourse may do so without having to use a backup method as long as it is not removed for longer than three hours.
4. No special accuracy is required for ring placement; absorption is fine anywhere in the vagina.
5. Because the ring is small and flexible, most women do not notice any pressure or discomfort, and it is not likely to be uncomfortable for their partners during intercourse.
6. Always have two rings on hand in case one is lost.
7. If the ring is left in place longer than three weeks, the user is still protected from pregnancy. The vaginal ring remains effective for 35 days, allowing flexibility in how often the ring must be replaced. For example, the ring could be reinserted on the first of the month each month with no hormone-free interval (similar to taking combined pills with no hormone-free days).

How do I insert the vaginal ring?

1. Each vaginal ring comes in an enclosable foil pouch. After washing and drying your hands, remove the vaginal ring from its foil pouch. Keep the foil pouch for proper disposal of the ring after use. Choose the position that is most comfortable for you; for example, lying down, squatting or standing with one leg up.
2. Hold the vaginal ring between your thumb and index finger and press the opposite sides of the ring together.
3. Gently push the folded ring into your vagina. The exact position of the vaginal ring in the vagina is not important for it to work.

Although some women may be aware of the vaginal ring in the vagina, most women do not feel it once it is in place. If you feel discomfort, the vaginal ring is probably not inserted back far enough in the vagina. Use your finger to gently push the vaginal ring further into your vagina. There is no danger of the vaginal ring being pushed too far up in the vagina or getting lost. The vaginal ring can be inserted only as far as the end of the vagina, where the cervix (the narrow, lower end of the uterus) will block the vaginal ring from going any further.

How do I remove the vaginal ring?

1. When it is time for the ring to be removed or changed, remove the vaginal ring by hooking your index finger under the forward rim or by grasping the rim between your index and middle fingers and pulling it out.
2. Place the used ring in the foil pouch and discard it in a wastebasket out of the reach of children and pets. Do not flush it down the toilet.