

NUVARING®

Hormonal Contraceptive Ring

NuvaRing® is a soft plastic ring used for contraception that is inserted into the vagina.

QUICK FACTS

Common name:

Vaginal ring.

Medical names:

NuvaRing® (brand name)

Etonogestrel/Ethinylestradiol (active ingredients).

Effectiveness:

93% with typical use, 99.5% with perfect use.

Effectiveness duration:

Each ring lasts for 3 weeks.

Fertility:

Fertility returns rapidly after the contraceptive ring use is stopped.

Who can use it?

Suitable for most people from menarche (start of periods) up to the age of 50.

Hormones:

Contains two hormones: oestrogen and progesterone.

Visibility:

Discreet. Need to store the packets. Partners may feel the ring.

STI's:

No protection.

Bleeding profile:

Irregular bleeding can occur in the first few months of use. Bleeding patterns generally improve with time.

Cost:

Cost depends on your individual situation.

Available on the PBS (under \$40).

How to get it:

Book an appointment at a True clinic or with your GP.



NUVARING® DOES NOT PROTECT AGAINST STI's. TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE PROTECTED AGAINST PREGNANCY AND STI's, USE NUVARING® PLUS A CONDOM FOR EVERY SEXUAL ENCOUNTER.

What is NuvaRing®?

NuvaRing® is a soft plastic ring which is inserted by the user into the vagina. Once inserted, the ring slowly releases low doses of 2 hormones, oestrogen and a progestogen, into the bloodstream. These hormones are similar to those used in the combined oral contraceptive pill (COCP).

How does NuvaRing® work?

- NuvaRing® prevents ovulation (egg release from the ovary)
- It thickens mucus in the cervix so sperm cannot enter the uterus (womb)
- It changes the lining of the uterus, making it unsuitable for pregnancy

How effective is NuvaRing®?

The ring is 99.5% effective when used perfectly. It is less effective if not used according to instructions. Certain medications reduce the effectiveness of NuvaRing®, ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for more information.

What are the advantages of NuvaRing®?

The advantages are:

- you don't need to remember a daily pill
- that it's not affected by factors that impact absorption from the gastrointestinal tract e.g. vomiting or severe diarrhoea
- it's easy to start and stop; allows for individual control over contraception.

Like the oral contraceptive pill, potential benefits include:

- reduction in heavy menstrual bleeding (lighter periods) - this also helps to maintain iron levels in the body
- reduction in period pain
- improvement in acne
- reduced risk of cancer of the uterus, bowel and ovary.

The contraceptive ring can be beneficial for people who experience premenstrual syndrome (PMS), who have polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) or who have endometriosis.

What are some disadvantages with NuvaRing®?

- You need to remember to remove the old ring and reinsert a new ring at correct intervals.
- It does not protect against sexually transmissible infections.
- It may cause vaginal irritation in some users.

Who should not use NuvaRing®?

People who have:

- current or past breast cancer or severe liver disease
- a previous history of stroke or significant coronary heart disease
- migraines with aura
- current or past history of blood clots
- given birth in the last 6 weeks, and are breastfeeding.

In addition, people over 35 years who smoke more than 15 cigarettes a day should not use NuvaRing®.

If you have unexplained vaginal bleeding, this needs to be checked out before starting NuvaRing®.

Certain medications (e.g. anti-epileptic medications) make NuvaRing® less effective as a contraceptive.

NuvaRing® has the same risk profile as the combined oral contraceptive pill (COCP), so if you have been told that you cannot use the COCP, NuvaRing® is not recommended either.

What are the possible side effects of NuvaRing®?

Side effects may include:

- sore or tender breasts
- headaches
- mood changes
- nausea.

Other possible side effects that may occur after using NuvaRing® for some time include:

- chloasma (brown patches to cheeks, forehead, nose or upper lip)
- decreased sex drive
- weight gain (research suggest this is not specifically related to the contraceptive but other factors occurring in the person's life)

NuvaRing® and blood clot (thrombosis) risk

Thrombosis is a rare but very serious complication which occurs when blood clots form in major blood vessels. Warning signs of a thrombosis are: severe sudden chest pain, shortness of breath, severe pain or swelling in one leg, sudden blurred vision or loss of sight, or sudden severe headache. If you have any of these symptoms contact your doctor or go to your nearest emergency department immediately.

The risk of thrombosis (blood clots) depends on your situation.

- The lowest risk is in women who are not pregnant and not using hormonal contraception (2 in 10,000).
- The highest risk is in women shortly after giving birth.
- Women using the combined hormonal contraception (pill or vaginal ring) have a higher risk than those not using hormonal contraception, but much lower than during or after pregnancy.

How do I use the NuvaRing®?

To use the NuvaRing®:

- Insert the first ring on any day from day 1 to 5 of your normal cycle.
- If you insert the first ring during day 1-5 of your cycle, then you are protected against pregnancy immediately.
- If the first ring is inserted at any other time in your menstrual cycle, you will be protected from pregnancy only after it has been in place seven days.

To insert the ring, squeeze the ring between thumb and index fingers, then insert into the vagina. Your vaginal muscles will keep it in place, even during exercise and sex. You do not feel the ring once in place.

Each ring is used for 3 weeks. After 3 weeks, remove the ring. It is recommended to take a 1 week break before inserting the next vaginal ring. During this one-week break, a withdrawal bleed ("period") usually occurs. It is important to place a new vaginal ring no more than 7 days after the previous one has been removed.

Some people prefer to place a new vaginal ring immediately after removal of the old ring. For most people this will mean that the withdrawal bleed ("period") can be delayed or skipped.

This is safe to do.

The NuvaRing® can be left in place during sex. If it is removed intentionally or accidentally during sex, it needs to be replaced within 3 hours to keep working as a contraceptive.

When NuvaRing® may not work

NuvaRing may not work properly if:

- you forget to insert a new ring after the 7 day break
- you remove it at any time for longer than 3 hours
- the same ring is left in for more than 4 weeks
- the packaging is exposed to extremes of temperature or dispensed more than 4 months ago: it is safe to keep spare rings at room temperature (under 30 °C) for a maximum of 4 months, do not use NuvaRing® if dispensed from the pharmacy more than four months ago
- certain medications or supplements are taken. Check with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you start a new medication or supplement.

Emergency contraception may be required if you do not use NuvaRing® according to instructions, and sexual activity occurred without a condom being used.

More detailed information about the use of the ring is provided in a booklet included in each NuvaRing® packet.

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