

VAGINAL RING

F A C T S H E E T

VAGINAL RING

NuvaRing is a new monthly method of contraception. The vaginal ring works in a similar way to the combined pill.

WHAT IS IT?

NuvaRing is a soft plastic ring containing the hormones oestrogen and progesterone. It is inserted inside the vagina to protect against pregnancy.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

NuvaRing is worn inside the vagina for three out of four weeks. Once inserted, the ring begins a slow, steady release of hormones. The walls of the vagina absorb the hormones and distribute them into the bloodstream, preventing ovulation (the release of an egg from the ovary).

NuvaRing works in a similar way to the Pill - for three weeks a woman is getting the hormones and for one week her body is resting. Women have a small period as they would get on the sugar pills in the pack, then a new ring goes back in. The ring sits high-up against the back of the vaginal wall and there is no requirement for correct positioning. Though it is not recommended, the ring can be taken out during sex if desired, but if removed it should be reinserted within three hours to maintain contraceptive effect.

If inserted correctly, most women cannot feel the ring once it is in their vagina.

HOW EFFECTIVE IS IT?

If used correctly, NuvaRing is around 99% effective at preventing pregnancy. If inserted on the first day of the menstrual cycle, or immediately after ceasing use of the combined oral contraceptive pill, Implanon or Depo Provera, it is effective immediately. If inserted later in the cycle, NuvaRing takes seven days to become effective.

WHO CAN USE NUVARING?

NuvaRing is suitable for most women.

Women who have difficulty remembering to take daily contraception may prefer this method. It is also a good alternative for women who are uncomfortable using more invasive methods of contraception such as implants or intrauterine devices.

You should not use it if you:

- have ever had a deep vein thrombosis, a stroke or a heart attack
- have hepatitis or other active liver disease
- have vaginal bleeding, the cause of which has not been diagnosed
- have focal migraines (headaches associated with visual changes, numbness in the face or hands, or other neurological symptoms)
- have had recent breast cancer.

A doctor needs to know if you:

- have, or have a family history of, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, gallstones, blood clots, diabetes, or certain blood disorders
- are breastfeeding
- are a smoker (as women who smoke are more at risk of developing a blood clot)
- are over 40
- have had cancer of the breast or of the uterus
- plan to have surgery
- are taking any other medications (prescribed, over-the-counter or herbal) or vitamins, as some products can react with the hormones in NuvaRing.

INSERTION AND REMOVAL

To insert the ring squeeze it between your thumb and index finger, then gently insert it into your vagina. Remember the exact position is not important for it to work. If you feel discomfort, simply slide it further into your vagina. Your vaginal muscles will keep the ring securely in place, even during exercise and sex. To remove the ring simply put your finger into your vagina, hook it inside the rim of the ring and pull it out.

WHAT IF I FORGET TO USE IT?

If you are more than 24 hours late inserting NuvaRing after your period, or if you remove it at any time for longer than three hours, insert it as soon as you remember and use another form of contraception for seven days (eg condoms).

Emergency contraception (EC) is available over the counter at pharmacies if you have unprotected sex before you regain your contraceptive cover. The sooner EC is taken after unprotected sex the more effective it is at preventing pregnancy, and its effectiveness is significantly increased when taken within 24 hours. It can be taken up to 120 hours (5 days) after intercourse, however, effectiveness decreases as time passes.

PTO

For further information

Contact the FPA Healthline on 1300 658 886

TTY (for deaf) 02 8752 4360

FS-086-2007

© FPWA 02/07



FAMILY PLANNING NSW

328-336 Liverpool Road Ashfield NSW 2131

Ph 02 9716 6099 • Fax 02 9716 5046

www.fpahealth.org.au

VAGINAL RING

F A C T S H E E T

ADVANTAGES

- NuvaRing contains a lower dose of hormones than the Pill and side effects such as nausea, sore breasts and spot bleeding may be less likely.
- As the hormones don't have to go through the stomach, the risk of pill failure associated with diarrhoea and vomiting is avoided.
- Women don't have to remember to take a pill every day.

DISADVANTAGES

Women using NuvaRing may have an increased risk of developing a thrombosis (blood clot in the vein), which can lead to stroke or heart attack (this is the same for women taking the Pill). It is important to drink plenty of water and move around regularly when flying, as there is a greater risk of clotting during long flights.

At this stage it is unclear whether NuvaRing's effectiveness is lowered when taking commonly-prescribed antibiotics (as is the case with the Pill). As a precaution, it is recommended that another form of contraception (eg condoms) be used when taking antibiotics, and until you have used the ring for seven days in a row after finishing the medication.

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE I NEED TO KNOW?

Seek medical help from a doctor or the FPNSW clinic at once if you develop any of the following:

- painful swelling of the calf (lower leg muscle)
- severe chest pains or abdominal pain
- a cough with blood-stained phlegm, or breathlessness
- a bad fainting attack or collapse
- an unusual, severe or persistent headache
- disturbance of speech or eyesight
- numbness or weakness of your face or of a limb.

Although NuvaRing does have some possible risks, few women actually have serious health problems related to using it. As smoking increases the risk of high blood pressure and heart disease, women using NuvaRing are strongly advised not to smoke.

NuvaRing does not protect against sexually transmissible infections (STIs).

For further information

Contact the FPA Healthline on 1300 658 886

TTY (for deaf) 02 8752 4360

FS-086-2007

© FPWA 02/07



FAMILY PLANNING NSW

328-336 Liverpool Road Ashfield NSW 2131

Ph 02 9716 6099 • Fax 02 9716 5046

www.fpahealth.org.au