

## Information About BIRTH CONTROL VAGINAL RING (“THE RING”)

### ***What is the vaginal ring?***

The ring is a monthly birth control method that is worn inside the vagina to prevent pregnancy.

### ***How does the vaginal birth control ring work?***

The ring works like birth control pills. While you are using the ring, it releases two hormones into your vagina where they are absorbed into your bloodstream. These hormones work to prevent pregnancy in the following ways:

The ring may:

- Keep the body from releasing an egg that could be fertilized by a man's sperm
- Cause changes in the cervical mucus making it more difficult for a man's sperm to enter the uterus (womb)

### ***How well does it work?***

When used correctly, the ring is very effective at preventing pregnancy. Like birth control pills, the ring works about 97-99% of the time.

### ***Why is the ring a good choice for me?***

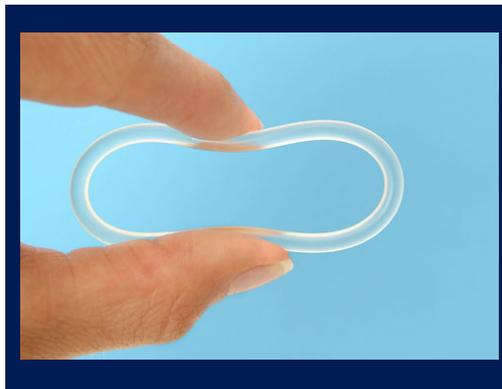
The vaginal ring is easy to use. You only have to think about birth control once a month.

### ***Is there anyone who should not use the vaginal ring?***

Most women can use the ring without having any problems. Women age 35 and older who smoke 15 or more cigarettes a day probably should not use the ring.

You should not use the ring if:

- You are pregnant or think you might be
- You have very bad pain in your chest or legs
- You have very bad headaches (migraines with aura) or dizziness
- You have uncontrolled high blood pressure
- You have ever had a heart attack, stroke, or blood clots
- The whites of your eyes look yellow or you have ever had liver tumors
- You have or had breast or other cancer
- You have bleeding from your vagina and do not know why



### ***What are the possible side effects of using the vaginal ring?***

The most common side effects of the ring are similar to birth control pills and include:

- Breast tenderness
- Nausea
- Headache
- Nasal stuffiness

- Mood swings
- Extra bleeding or spotting between the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> month of use
- Vaginal irritation or an increase in vaginal discharge

### ***How do I know if I have a problem from using the vaginal ring?***

If you have any of the warning signs below, call your doctor, nurse, or clinic right away:

- Bad pain in your arms or legs or you lose feeling
- Headaches, dizziness, or fainting
- Eye problems (flashing lights, fuzzy vision or suddenly you cannot see)
- Very bad pain in your lower stomach
- A lump in your breast
- Yellowing of your eyes or skin

Very few women have these problems.

### ***How do I start the vaginal ring?***

There are several methods to starting the ring. It depends on whether you are already using another type of birth control when you start the ring. The method to start the ring that is best for you will depend on your circumstances. Talk with your doctor or nurse.

***I should begin using the vaginal ring on:*** \_\_\_\_\_

## Information About BIRTH CONTROL VAGINAL RING (“THE RING”), continued

### ***What are some of the benefits for using the vaginal ring?***

Some of the benefits of using the vaginal ring are:

- Your chance of having a pregnancy in your tubes decreases.
- Your chance of getting cancer in your ovaries and uterus decreases.
- Once you have inserted the ring, it is left in place for 3 weeks.
- It is comfortable for women and their partners and easy to use.
- Your periods may have less pain and be shorter and lighter.
- It is not a pill that you have to remember to take every day.

### ***How do you use the ring?***

Insert one ring into the vagina and keep it there for 3 weeks in a row. Remove it for a 1-week break and then insert a new ring. During the break you should get your period.

#### Example of a Cycle:

- Week One- Insert new ring.  
Week Two- Leave ring in place.  
Week Three- Leave ring in place.  
Week Four- Remove ring and your period should start this week.

### ***How do I insert and remove the ring?***

1. Each ring comes in a foil pouch that will reclose. After washing and drying your hands, remove the ring from

the pouch. Choose a position for insertion that is most comfortable for you. Some possibilities are lying down, squatting, or standing with one leg up (on the toilet or a chair).

2. Hold the ring between your thumb and index finger and press the opposite sides of the ring together.
3. Gently push the folded ring into the vagina. Use your finger to gently push the ring up in the vagina. There is no danger of pushing the ring too far.
4. After 3 weeks, remove the ring by hooking the index finger under the forward rim and pulling it out.

Your period should start 2-3 days after removing the ring. Your period may not be finished when it is time to insert a new vaginal ring.

### ***What happens if the vaginal ring slips out?***

If the ring slips out and it has been out less than 3 hours, you should still be protected from pregnancy. Simply rinse the ring off in lukewarm water and reinsert it as soon as you can. If the ring has been out of the vagina for longer than 3 hours, you would need to use a back-up method of birth control, like condoms, for 7 days after reinserting. If the ring continues to slip out, please tell your doctor or nurse.

### ***Can I breastfeed while using the vaginal ring?***

**Yes!** You may use the vaginal ring after being informed about the chance of your milk supply being reduced. If breastfeeding only and using a birth control method with estrogen, only begin to use 6 weeks after your baby is born and your milk supply is well established.

It is recommended that breastfeeding women use progestin-only methods; such as, “the Shot”, like Depo-Provera, Mirena IUS, or the Minipill.

### ***Where can I get the vaginal ring?***

You can get the ring or a prescription for the ring at your local health department, a family planning clinic or a doctor’s office.

### ***If you are thinking about stopping use of the vaginal ring for birth control!***

Before you stop using the vaginal ring, call your doctor or nurse to talk about it.

#### **REMEMBER:**

*The vaginal ring will not protect you against HIV or any other sexually transmitted infections. Use condoms to protect yourself each time you have sex.*

***If you have any questions, call us at:***

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