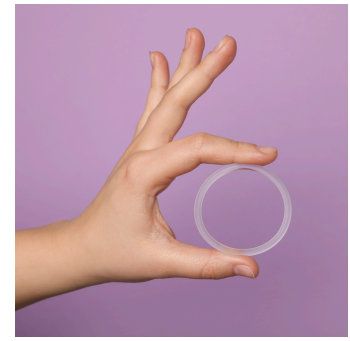


Intravaginal Ring

What is combined hormonal birth control?

Combined hormonal birth control uses two types of hormones to prevent pregnancy. They are called estrogen and progestin. They work by:

- stopping the release of an egg (ovulation),
- thickening the cervical fluid to keep sperm from reaching the egg, and
- changing the lining of the uterus.



What products are available?

There are three types of combined hormonal birth control:

- Pills (several brands)
- Skin patch (Evra™)
- Vaginal ring (Haloette™)

How effective is the ring?

- The ring is 93% effective preventing pregnancy when used correctly.
- Some medications including herbal supplements can interfere with hormonal birth control. Talk to your healthcare provider.

Advantages

- Lighter and regular periods
- Less period pain and cramps
- Sometimes helps with acne
- Protects from cysts in the breasts
- Lowers risk of ovarian and uterine cancers
- Only need to change the ring once a month

Disadvantages

- Have to remember to change the ring every month
- Not indicated for women over 35 who smoke
- Does not protect from sexually transmitted infections
- Some users may experience mild side effects

Side effects

Some people have side effects which usually go away a few weeks after starting the medication:

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| • Nausea | • Headaches |
| • Sore breasts | • Mood changes |
| • Spotting
(bleeding between periods) | • Skin changes |

If you experience side effects that bother you, go to a clinic or pharmacy to talk about other options **before** you stop using the ring.

WARNING

Reasons to get urgent medical help:

- Frequent or very bad headaches
- Severe pain in your stomach
- Severe leg pain
- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Sudden change in seeing or speaking clearly

Birth control is free for BC residents with MSP. For more information, check out the BC Pharmacare website.

Where can you get the ring?

- The ring is available only with a prescription, which you can get at a sexual health clinic, pharmacy or from your health care provider.
- One brand of the ring (Haloette™) is free at pharmacies if you have MSP. Nuvaring has a cost. Nuvaring is free at some youth clinics.
- Some clinics sell the ring for less, such as Options for Sexual Health.

The birth control vaginal ring DOES NOT provide protection from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

*STI testing is recommended every 6-12 months and/or when you have a new partner(s).
STI testing is available at a sexual health clinic or with your health care provider.*

How is the ring used?

3 weeks in - 1 week out

- Insert the ring into the vagina right away or on the first day of your next period.
- Squeeze the ring and insert the ring into the vagina as high as you can with your finger. There is no exact place for the ring to be inside the vagina, it just needs to be inside all the way and comfortable. If it is not comfortable, reinsert until it is.
- Leave the ring in for 3 weeks.

The ring is effective in preventing pregnancy after 7 days of using the ring. **Use condoms as back-up for the first seven days of use.**

Storing the ring:

Do not store the ring in really hot or cold places. You do not need to keep your ring in the refrigerator.

- At the end of 3 weeks, take the ring out and throw it away. During the fourth week you will not insert a ring into the vagina. This is your hormone-free week. You will get your period during this time.
- After the hormone-free week (no more than 7 days), insert a new vaginal ring and start the 3 week cycle again. Put in a new ring even if you are still having your period.

What if the ring comes out or you forget to change the ring?

Pregnancy may occur if birth control is not used properly when sexually active.

Ring out for less than 3 hours

Rinse it with water and insert back into the vagina. You will still be protected from pregnancy.

Forgot to take the ring out: Less than 28 days

If it has been less than 28 days, take the ring out and start the next ring on time. You will still be protected from pregnancy.

Ring out for more than 3 hours

You may not be protected from pregnancy.

If you still have the ring, rinse it with water and put it back in as soon as possible or if you lost the ring insert a new one as soon as possible.

- Keep it in until the scheduled ring removal day (21 days after you first inserted this ring).
- Skip the hormone-free break this month. This means inserting a new ring right after removing the current one.
- Use a back up method (e.g. condoms) or do not have sex until you've had a ring back in for 7 days in a row.
- Consider emergency contraception if you had sex without a condom in the last 5-7 days.

Forgot to take the ring out: More than 28 days

If the ring has been in for more than 28 days, you may not be protected from pregnancy.

- Take the ring out and insert a new ring immediately for at least 21 days. Do not take a hormone-free week. A pregnancy test may be recommended.
- Use a back up method (e.g. condoms) or do not have sex until you've had the new ring back in for 7 days in a row.
- Consider emergency contraception if you had sex without a condom in the last 5-7 days.

Questions?

If you have questions about your birth control, do not stop taking it. Call your health care provider, sexual health clinic, pharmacy, or 1-800-SEX-SENSE.

Find the clinic closest to you:

<https://www.vch.ca/en/service/sexual-health-clinics>
www.optionsforsexualhealth.org



This fact sheet contains general information and should not be used in place of individual consultation with a qualified healthcare provider.