

Vaginal Ring- NuvaRing

The Vaginal Ring- what is it?

The vaginal ring is a soft plastic ring containing the hormones oestrogen and progestogen. It is inserted inside the vagina to protect against pregnancy. It is sold in Australia as the NuvaRing.

How does the NuvaRing work?

It 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 send them into the bloodstream. This prevents ovulation (the release of an egg from the ovary).

NuvaRing works in a similar way to the oral contraceptive pill ('the pill'). Hormones are absorbed into the body for three weeks and for one week when the ring is removed, there is a break from hormones. During this week a withdrawal bleed like a period will occur.

After the one week break, a **new** NuvaRing is inserted.

The ring lies high up in the vagina and there is no need to position it correctly. If it is removed for any reason, it *must* be put in again as soon as possible, and *definitely* within three hours, to maintain its contraceptive effect.

There is no problem using condoms and tampons with the NuvaRing.

How do you use the NuvaRing?

- Place the ring into the vagina and with the thumb and index finger, squeeze the sides of the ring together and push into the vagina. If you feel discomfort, simply push it further up into the vagina. Your vaginal muscles will keep the ring in place, even during exercise and sex.
- Leave the ring in for three weeks and then take it out. Put the old ring in the rubbish (not down the toilet).
- Have a seven day break from wearing the ring and then insert a new ring.

It is very important to have a system to remember to remove a used ring and insert a new ring. The NuvaRing packs contain diary stickers and details about how to subscribe to a free SMS reminder service.

When does the NuvaRing start working?

- If you insert it on the first day of the menstrual cycle, it is effectively immediately.
- If you insert it later in the cycle, NuvaRing takes seven days to become effective.
- If you are changing from 'the pill' or Depo-Provera injection, the ring will be effective immediately *if* you put it in before the other method runs out.
- If you are changing from Implanon, the progestogen only pill (minipill) or an IUD (intrauterine device), it will usually take seven days for NuvaRing to be effective.

How effective is the NuvaRing?

If used correctly, NuvaRing is around 99% effective at preventing pregnancy.

What happens if I am late putting in a NuvaRing?

*If it is later than seven days when inserting a **new** ring:*

- Alternative contraception (e.g. condoms) must be used for the next seven days before you are covered again.
- If you had sex in the previous five days without using any other contraception e.g. condoms, you will need emergency contraception*.

*If the NuvaRing is taken out and not replaced for more than **three** hours:*

- Alternative contraception (e.g. condoms) should be used for seven days before you are covered again.

- If there are fewer than seven days of ring use left, reinsert the ring and insert a new ring immediately the used ring is removed. This will skip the ring free week and there won't be a bleed that month.

What happens if the NuvaRing falls out?

It is unusual for the NuvaRing to fall out. As long as it has not been out for more than three hours, just rinse it in lukewarm water and reinsert. You are covered for contraception.

Can I have sex with the NuvaRing in?

It is a good idea to keep the NuvaRing in while having sex. Most partners cannot feel the ring when it is in place. If you prefer to remove it during sex, you must put it back as soon as possible and definitely within three hours.

What are the advantages?

- You don't need to remember to take a pill every day.
- You will have menstrual cycle control- bleeding every 28 days.
- It is less common to have spot bleeding with the NuvaRing than with 'the pill'.
- Less period pain and bleeding on fewer days.
- It is a very private method of contraception.
- NuvaRing contains a lower dose of hormones than the oral contraceptive pill.
- As the hormones don't have to go through the stomach (gut), the risk of pill failure associated with diarrhoea and vomiting is avoided.

What are the disadvantages?

- Risk of bleeding or spotting between bleeds
- Nausea
- Breast tenderness or soreness
- Headaches

More serious problems are rare but may include blood clots and high blood pressure. See your doctor immediately if you have any pain, or swelling in an arm or leg.

NuvaRing is suitable for most women, but not for most breast feeding women, some women with chronic constipation and women with vaginal prolapse, as it is more likely to fall out.

Discuss NuvaRing with your doctor if you smoke or have:

- high blood pressure,
- liver disease,

as these related health risks may make it unsuitable for you also.

Who should not use the NuvaRing?

Women who:

- have ever had a deep vein thrombosis, a stroke or a heart attack
- have severe hepatitis or some forms of 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

NuvaRing will not protect you against sexually transmissible infections (STIs). Use condoms and dams to protect yourself against STIs, especially with all new sexual partners.

Will the NuvaRing affect my fertility?

Most women who want to have a baby will be fertile again soon after stopping using the NuvaRing. There is no known long term effect on fertility of using NuvaRing.

Where do I get it?

You need a prescription from a doctor and then you buy it at a pharmacy.

Medications

Some medications, including commonly used antibiotics, can make the NuvaRing less effective. Seek advice from your doctor.

St John's Wort can be bought from supermarkets and is a natural remedy sometimes used for depression. It should not be taken if you are using NuvaRing.

- Emergency contraception is available from a chemist without a doctor's prescription. See the FPV pamphlet *Emergency Contraception* for more detailed information.

This pamphlet is no substitute for medical advice. See your health professional for any concerns about NuvaRing.



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