

FACT SHEET : THE RING

Remember, the ring **does not** protect you from **Sexually Transmitted Infections or HIV**. Always use condoms to protect yourself!



HOW DOES THE RING WORK?

- The ring contains hormones (estrogen and progestin) like the ones your body makes. These hormones stop your ovaries from releasing eggs. Without an egg, you cannot get pregnant.
- Some people may prefer to avoid estrogen-containing methods, however, it is safe to use.
- No method of birth control is 100% effective. The ring is 93% effective.

HOW DO I START THE RING?

- There are 2 ways to start the ring:
 - **Quick Start:** put in your first ring as soon as you get the pack.
 - **Next period:** put in your first ring soon after your next period begins.
- If you put your ring in *up to 5 days after the start of your period*, you are protected against pregnancy **right away**.
- If you put your ring in *more than 5 days after the start of your period*, you should **use condoms as back-up for the first 7 days**.

HOW DO I USE THE RING?

- The ring is a small, bendable, plastic circle that you insert into your vagina.
- You leave the ring in your vagina for 3 weeks, and remove it for the 4th week.
- Remove the ring by hooking a finger under the rim and pulling it out.
- Most people get their period during the ring-free week.
- There are 2 types of rings: a monthly ring and a yearly ring.
- You can store the monthly ring at room temperature up to 4 months. In the refrigerator, the monthly ring lasts much longer.

DO I HAVE TO GET A PERIOD?

- Because the monthly ring has enough hormones to last 35 days, you can leave it in for more than 3 weeks. You can change the ring on the same day of each month (for instance, March 1st, April 1st, May 1st, etc.). If you remove the old ring and insert the new ring on the same day, you may not get a period. This is OK.

WHAT IF THE RING COMES OUT?

- The ring may slip out during sex or when you use the bathroom. The ring can stay out of your body for up to 3 hours and still prevent pregnancy. If the ring is out of your body for more than 3 hours, you should put it back into your vagina and **use condoms for the next 7 days**.

WHAT IF I STOPPED USING THE RING AND HAD UNPROTECTED SEX?

- To prevent pregnancy, take Emergency Contraception (EC) **right away**. EC can prevent pregnancy up to 5 days after sex, and it works better the sooner you take it.

HOW DOES THE RING HELP ME?

- The ring is safe and effective birth control. Your periods may be more regular, lighter, and shorter. You may have clearer skin. The ring lowers your risk of getting cancer of the uterus and ovaries. The ring has **no effect** on your ability to get pregnant in the future, after you stop using it.

HOW WILL I FEEL ON THE RING?

- You will feel about the same. In the first few months you may have nausea, bleeding between periods, and/or breast pain. These symptoms often go away after 2-3 months.

DOES THE RING HAVE RISKS?

- The ring is very safe. Serious problems are rare. If you have any of the symptoms below, call your clinician:
 - Leg pain, swelling, and redness
 - Weakness or numbness on 1 side of your body
 - Bad headache
 - Vision problems
 - Chest pain
- Your clinician can help you find out if these symptoms are signs of a serious problem.

