



## **Birth Control Ring**

(Ex. NuvaRing®)

### **What Is the Birth Control (BC) Ring?**

The BC ring is a soft, flexible ring about two inches in diameter, and is worn in the vagina. The ring contains the hormones estrogen and progestin which are similar to the ones found natural in an individual's body that help control fertility. Low doses of hormones are continuously released and absorbed through the walls of the vagina into an individual's body. The ring replaces the natural reproductive cycle with an artificial one. The ring is placed in the vagina for 21 days to prevent and individual from becoming pregnant.

### **How Does the BC Ring Prevent Pregnancy?**

The artificial cycle created by the vaginal ring prevents pregnancy in three ways:

1. The ovaries temporarily stop hormone production and in turn, ovulation (the release of an egg) does not take place every month.
2. The lining of an individual's uterus becomes thinner, which makes it difficult for a fertilized egg to attach if ovulation happens to occur (very rare).
3. The cervix (opening to the uterus) produces thicker mucus making it difficult for sperm to travel to the uterus.

### **How Effective is the BC Ring?**

When the ring is used perfectly as prescribed, this method is 99% effective in protecting against pregnancy. There is a "user failure rate" of approximately 8% since some individuals make mistakes in using the ring or experience interference from other medications.

**Please check with your pharmacist before taking prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines, herbal remedies and vitamins.**

Since the BC Ring only protects against pregnancy, individuals need to use condoms consistently and properly for oral, vaginal, and anal sex to protect against sexually transmitted infections.

## Which BC Rings Are Available?

NuvaRing® is the only brand available in Canada

## How Do I Get Started?

When an individual decides to start using the BC ring, their healthcare provider will advise them to insert the vaginal ring between Day 1 and Day 5 of their cycle. Please note that the first day of an individual's menstrual period is day 1 of their cycle.

During this first cycle, an individual must use an extra form of BC (i.e. condoms) for the first seven days of using the ring.

## How Do I Get into the Routine?

When an individual fills their prescription for the BC Ring, they will receive a box containing one ring which will be used during the 28-day cycle. Once an individual has inserted their first ring, they will leave it in their vagina for 21 days. When the 21 days are complete, they will remove the ring for a 7-day break and will begin their period during this time.

Please note that bleeding may be lighter and shorter than normal. After the ring-free break is complete, an individual will insert a new ring and go through the same routine for another 28 days. Keep in mind that an individual is protected against pregnancy during the 7-day break.

**Warning: Never go more than 7 days before inserting a new ring.**

## How Do I Use the BC Ring?

To insert the ring, get into a comfortable position and simply squeeze the ring between the thumb and index finger and gently insert it into the vagina.



**Step 2: Choose a position that is comfortable for you.**

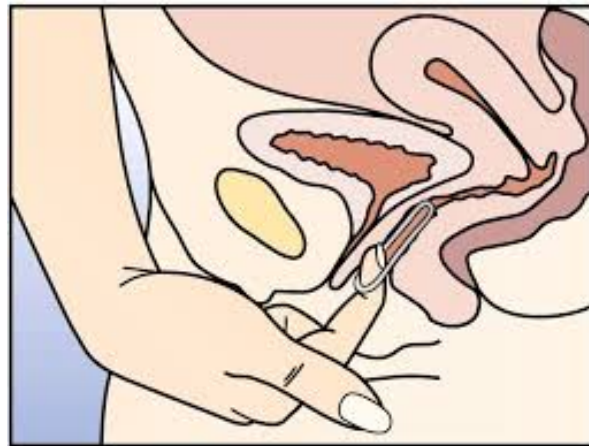


**Step 3: Press the opposite sides of NuvaRing® together and gently insert it.**

The ring will conform to fit an individual's body once the ring is placed in the vagina. If the ring can be felt inside the vagina, the individual needs to slide the ring further into the vagina with their finger. An individual should not feel the ring when it is in the proper place. The exact location is not important as long as individual feel comfortable. The muscles in the vagina will keep the ring securely in place for the 21 days.

*Keep in mind that an individual cannot push the ring too far up in the vagina – the ring will not go past an individual's cervix!*

**To remove the ring**, an individual will need to insert a finger into the vagina and hook it under the ring to pull it out.



### **What Should I Do if I Forget to Put a New BC Ring in?**

If the ring-free break has been extended beyond 7 days, pregnancy is a possibility. Therefore, a backup BC method must be used until the new ring has been worn continuously for 7 days.

### **What Should I Do If I Leave a BC Ring in for Too Long?**

**If a ring has been left in the vagina for up to one extra week**, remove it and have a 7-day break. Insert a new ring after the ring-free break.

**If a ring has been in place for more than 4 weeks**, an individual may not be protected against pregnancy and they should check to make sure they are not pregnant. If they are not pregnant, they will insert a new ring (after removing the old ring). An individual will need to use a backup BC method for the first 7 days of continuously using the new ring.

### **What Happens if the BC Ring Slips Out of the Vagina?**

It is rare for the BC ring to slip out of the vagina. The muscles in the vagina secure the ring from coming out of place, even during intercourse. However, the ring may accidentally slip out of the vagina while removing a tampon or when straining during a bowel movement.

If the ring does slip out and it has been out of the vagina **for less than 3 hours**, an individual should still be protected against pregnancy. Simply rinse the ring with cool or lukewarm water and re-insert the ring in the vagina as soon as possible.

If the ring has been out of the vagina **for more than 3 hours during week 1 or week 2** of using the ring, the effectiveness of the ring may be reduced. Rinse the ring with cool or lukewarm water and re-insert it as soon as possible. An individual will need to use a back-up method of BC until the ring has been used continuously for 7 days after reinsertion.

If the ring has been out of the vagina for **more than 3 hours during week 3** of using the ring, throw the ring away and choose one of the following options:

1. Insert a new ring immediately and leave this ring in the vagina for 21 days. In this case, an individual may not experience a period from the previous cycle.
2. If an individual was wearing the ring continuously for the previous 7 days, they can begin the 7-day ring-free break at this time and begin their period. They will need to insert a new ring no longer than 7 days from when the previous ring slipped out.

With both options, an individual will need to use a backup method of BC (i.e. condoms) until the new ring has been continuously for 7 days.

### **What Are Some of the Benefits of the BC Ring?**

- Requires no day-to-day routine.
- Is simple and very effective.
- Is reversible
- Is a great alternative to the pill
- Less failures – You do not have to remember to take a pill every day or worry about adjusting their pill-taking timing if crossing time zones, etc.

### **Who Should Not Use the BC Ring?**

- Individuals who have current or past history of blood clots.
- Individuals with certain cardiovascular conditions.
- Individuals who suffer from diabetes with end-organ involvement.
- Individuals who experience headaches with aura.
- Individuals with cancer of the breast, endometrium, or cervix.
- Individuals who have liver disease.
- Individuals who are pregnant.
- Individuals who are allergic to any components of the ring.
- Individuals who smoke, especially if they are more than 35 years old.

If you have further questions regarding BC options or would like to see a healthcare provider regarding any sexual health matter, please contact us.

# **Sexual Health Questions? We Have Answers!**

Location:

47 St. Clare Avenue, St. John's, NL, A1C 2J9

Hours:

Monday: 9am - 4:30pm

Tuesday: 9am - 4:30pm

Wednesday: 9am - 4:30pm

Thursday: 12pm – 6:00pm

Friday: 9am - 4:30pm

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