

▶ **What is the contraceptive ring?**

It is a soft, flexible, clear plastic ring that is inserted into the vagina. It slowly releases two hormones (estrogen and progestin) over a period of 3 weeks. The ring comes in one size and is held in place by the vaginal walls. It cannot usually be felt when it is in place. The ring is left in the vagina for 3 weeks (do not remove for intercourse) followed by a 7-day ring-free interval.

▶ **How does the contraceptive ring work?**

The ring prevents pregnancy by:

- stopping the ovaries from releasing an egg
- causing mucus in the cervix to thicken making it hard for sperm to enter the uterus
- causing the lining of the uterus to get thinner making it hard for a fertilized egg to attach

▶ **What are the advantages of the contraceptive ring?**

- 99% effective in preventing pregnancy if used correctly (92-97% effective with typical use)
- Convenient, changed only once a month
- Lighter, shorter, more regular periods
- Less cramping with your periods
- Improvement in acne
- Lower risk of cysts of ovaries or breast and of cancer of the ovaries or the lining of the uterus
- Lower risk of endometriosis, tubal pregnancy and anemia
- Progestin vaginal ring (PVR) can be used by breastfeeding women at 6 weeks post-partum onwards

▶ **What are the possible side effects or risks?**

Side effects from the ring most often occur in the first 3 months. Unless side effects are severe, it is best to continue using the ring for 3 months before you think about a change in birth control

Some possible side effects:

- Spotting or bleeding between periods
- Missing a period

- Headaches (if severe or more frequent than usual call your health care provider or the clinic)
- Breast tenderness
- Nausea
- Vaginal irritation, discomfort or discharge

CAUTION

▶ **Seek medical attention at once if you notice any of the following:**

- Severe pain in your legs or abdomen
- Severe chest pain, cough and/or shortness of breath
- Blurring or loss of vision, speech problems
- Depression
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin).

▶ **What if I forget to take the ring out?**

If it has been in for 28 days or less (up to 1 week too long)



Take it out, wait seven days then insert a new ring. You are still protected from pregnancy.

If it has been in for more than 28 - 35 days (1-2 weeks too long)



Take it out, insert a new ring right away without taking a break and leave it in for 3 weeks.

If it has been in for more than 35 days (more than 2 weeks too long) you could get pregnant



Take it out, insert a new ring right away, and leave it in for 3 weeks.

Abstain from intercourse or use condoms until the ring has been in place for 7 days.

If you have had unprotected intercourse within the last 5 days, consider emergency contraception.

▶ **How do I use the contraceptive ring?**

- Start using the ring by inserting it between day one and day five of your menstrual cycle (count the first day of vaginal bleeding as day one).
- Inserting the ring is much like using a tampon. After washing your hands, squeeze the ring between your thumb and index finger, and then insert it into the vagina as far as it will go. It cannot get "lost" because the vagina is a closed space.
- It will take 7 days for the ring to become effective, so be sure to use condoms for the first week.
- Remove the ring after 21 days (3 weeks) on the same day of the week that it was inserted. To do this, put a finger into your vagina and pull it out. Dispose of the ring in the garbage, out of the reach of children or pets. You will usually have a period within a few days.
- After 7 days, insert a new ring on the same day of the week that you removed the previous ring to start a new cycle, even if you are still bleeding.

▶ **Are there times when the ring may not be effective??**

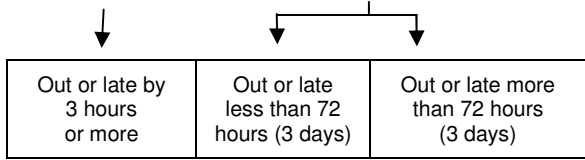
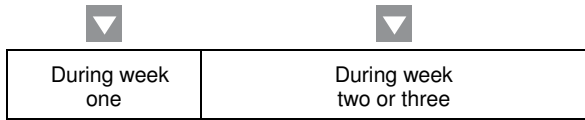
Yes, you should use condoms for additional protection

- When waiting to start using the ring
- For the first 7 days after starting the ring
- If you are taking certain medications (prescription or over-the-counter) you may need to use condoms during treatment and for seven days after you finish your medication. Always check with your health care provider or pharmacist to be sure.
- If you have unprotected sex during a time when the ring might not be effective, contact the Sexual Health clinic, your health care provider or pharmacist about the need for emergency contraception.

▶ **What happens if the ring falls out or I forget to insert a new one?**

If it has been out for 3 hours or less ▶ Insert the ring as soon as possible. Leave it in place until the scheduled removal date.

If it has been out for more than 3 hours or you are more than 24 hours late inserting the ring



<p>Insert the ring as soon as possible. Keep it in until the scheduled ring removal day.</p> <p>Abstain or use condoms for 7 days.</p> <p>If you have had unprotected intercourse in the last 7 days, consider emergency contraception.</p>	<p>Insert the ring as soon as possible.</p> <p>Keep it in until the scheduled ring removal day.</p> <p>Start a new cycle with a new ring without a break.</p>	<p>Insert the ring as soon as possible.</p> <p>Keep it in until the scheduled ring removal day.</p> <p>Start a new cycle with a new ring without a break. Abstain or use condoms for 7 days.</p> <p>If you have had unprotected intercourse within the last 5 days, consider emergency contraception.</p>
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▶ **Things to Remember**

- The contraceptive ring does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). You should use condoms every time you have sex.
- It is important to have a yearly physical while you are using the ring.
- When you are using the ring you are strongly advised not to smoke. Cigarette smoking increases the risk of serious adverse effects on the heart and blood vessels. This risk increases with age.

▶ **Who can you talk to if you have more questions?**

If you have concerns or questions, call and ask for Sexual Health, or visit the health unit website below.



simcoe muskoka
DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

Tel: 705-721-7520
Toll free: 1-877-721-7520
www.simcoemuskokahealth.org

▶ **Resources**

Stay on Schedule (SOS): www.sexualityandu.ca

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