FACT SHEET: THE RING

Remember, the ring **does not protect you from Sexually Transmitted Infections or HIV.** If you are looking for protection from STIs and HIV, both the internal and external condoms are great options!

HOW DOES THE RING WORK?

- The ring contains hormones (estrogen and a progestin), similar to the ones your body makes. While you are using the ring, it stops your ovaries from releasing eggs. Without an egg, you cannot get pregnant.
- No method of birth control is 100% effective. Seven in 100 people using the ring for a year get pregnant.

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.
- To insert it, squeeze the sides of the ring together with your fingers and gently push it deep into your vagina. Don't worry about the exact placement. If you cannot feel it when you're walking around, it's in correctly.
- Remove the ring by hooking a finger under the rim and pulling it out.
- There are 2 types of rings: a monthly ring and a yearly ring.
  - **Monthly Ring (NuvaRing):** You leave the ring in your vagina for 21 days (3 weeks), and remove it for the 4th week. Use a new ring about once a month.
    - Most people get their period during the ring-free week.
    - Because the monthly ring has enough hormones to last 35 days (5 weeks), you can leave it in for 3-5 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.
    - You can store the monthly ring at room temperature up to 4 months. In the refrigerator, the monthly ring lasts much longer.
  - **Yearly Ring (Annovera):** One ring lasts for 1 year (13 cycles). You leave the ring in your vagina for 21 days (3 weeks), then take it out for 7 days.
    - Your ring comes with a case to safely store it during your ring-free week. Do not put it in the refrigerator.
    - Most people get their period during the ring-free week.
    - After 7 days ring-free, wash your ring with mild soap and lukewarm water, then pat it dry with a clean towel or paper towel. Put the ring back in your vagina.
    - It's possible to skip periods on the yearly ring by leaving it in.
      - After one year, you get a new ring.

WHAT IF THE RING COMES OUT?

- The ring may slip out during sex or when you use the bathroom. The monthly ring can stay out of your body for up to 3 hours every 24 hours and still prevent pregnancy; the yearly ring can stay out of the body up to 2 hours every 3 weeks.
- If the ring is out of your body for more than this time, you should put it back into your vagina and use a back-up birth control method until you have had the ring inside your body for 7 days straight. To do this, you may need to skip your "ring-free week". Start a new ring if you've used it for more than 35 days (monthly ring) or 365 days (yearly ring).

continued on the other side →

FACT SHEET: THE RING

Remember, the ring **does not protect you from Sexually Transmitted Infections or HIV.** If you are looking for protection from STIs and HIV, both the internal and external condoms are great options!

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

- You can 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.

WHAT DO PEOPLE LIKE ABOUT THE RING?

- 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.
- Although some people who take testosterone may prefer to avoid estrogen, the ring is safe to use.

HOW WILL THE RING AFFECT ME?

- You will feel about the same. In the first few months you may have nausea, bleeding between periods, and/or breast/chest pain. These symptoms often go away after 2-3 months.
- After you stop using the ring, you can get pregnant right away.

WHERE CAN I GET THE RING?

- You can get the ring at pharmacies with a prescription. Some pharmacies can mail you the ring.

IS THE RING SAFE?

- 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 are signs of a serious problem.
- People should not use the ring during the first 3-6 weeks after childbirth. Safer options include progestin-only and barrier methods.