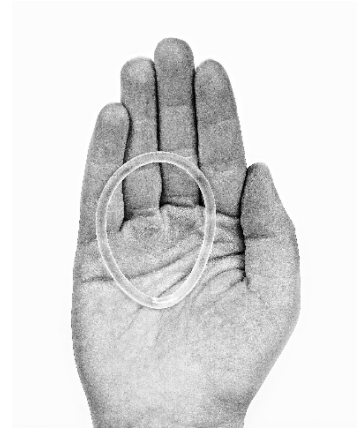


Birth Control Ring

What is the birth control ring (the ring)?

The birth control ring is a soft, 5.5 cm (2 in.), clear, plastic (non-latex) ring that you put in your vagina to prevent pregnancy.

The ring contains hormones (estrogen and progestin) that are like natural hormones. They stop the ovaries from releasing an egg. You can't get pregnant if you don't release an egg.



How well does the ring work?

- With **typical use** (not following the exact directions) the ring is **91%** effective.
- With **perfect use** (following the exact directions all the time) the ring is **99.7%** effective.
- Most pregnancies happen because people don't use the ring as directed.
- The ring doesn't protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or HIV.

How do I start using the ring?

You need a prescription from your health care provider. Many sexual health clinics offer some types of birth control for free or low cost for people who qualify.

If you start on:

- day 1 of your period, it works right away to prevent pregnancy
- any other day, use an extra method of birth control (e.g., condoms) or don't have vaginal sex for 7 days

How do I use the ring?

Put the ring in your vagina. Leave the ring in for **3 weeks** (21 days). After 3 weeks, take the ring out. You'll start your 7 hormone-free days. You'll get your period when you aren't wearing the ring and you're still protected from pregnancy during this time. There are apps you can use to help you remember when to put in and take out the ring.

After your 7 hormone-free days, always put in a **new ring**. Even if you still have your period, you need to put a new ring in. You can still use a tampon or menstrual cup when you have the ring in.

If you haven't had your period, put a new ring in and contact your health care provider. Consider doing a pregnancy test if you've had vaginal sex without a condom since your last period.

The ring can be stored for up to 4 months at room temperature.

While using the ring, you should not use internal methods of birth control such as diaphragm, cervical cap, or internal (vaginal) condom as your extra method of birth control. The ring can get in the way of those methods being in the right place they need to be in order to work.

How do I put the ring in?

- 1) Wash your hands. Get into a comfortable position (e.g., standing with one foot up on a chair).
- 2) Squeeze the ring between your thumb and finger. Gently push it up into your vagina (see Figure 1). It doesn't matter how the ring is placed, as long as it's high enough that it won't fall out. If it feels uncomfortable, the ring might not be up far enough. Use your finger to push it further up. The ring can't get lost in your vagina or be pushed in too far.

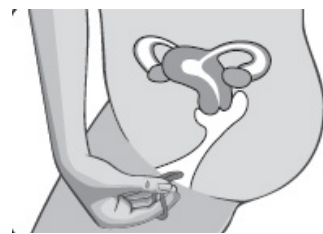


Figure 1

How do I take the ring out?

- 1) Wash your hands.
- 2) Hook your finger under the rim and pull the ring down and out. Throw it in the garbage, away from children and pets because it still contains hormones.

What are the benefits of the ring?

- Your period may be more regular, lighter, and/or shorter with less cramping.
- The ring may lower your risk of ovarian and endometrial cancer.
- The ring may help with acne and painful periods (dysmenorrhea).
- It's safe to use the ring for many years. There's no need to "take a break" from the ring.
- You can get pregnant as soon as you stop using the ring.

What are the side effects of the ring?

There's a chance (more likely in the first 3 months) that you might have:

- headaches
- upset stomach (nausea)
- spotting or bleeding between periods
- breast/chest tenderness
- mood changes
- vaginal irritation or more discharge
- weight changes
- bloating

If you have any side effects, don't stop using the ring. Talk to your health care provider. Most side effects get better within 3 months.

Can the ring cause blood clots?

When using the ring, there's a small risk of blood clots in the legs, lungs, heart, and/or the head. The risk is higher depending on:

- age
- weight
- history (or family history) of blood clots, heart attack, or stroke
- history of smoking or vaping nicotine (especially people older than 35 who smoke or vape)
- if you are less than 21 days postpartum
- history of migraines with aura or other nervous system problems affecting speech, vision, movement, or sensations
- risk factors for heart disease (e.g., high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol)
- history of other medical problems (ask your health care provider about this)

The risk of getting a blood clot is higher during pregnancy and right after having a baby than when using the ring.

Blood clots are very serious. Go to the nearest emergency department or call 911 if you have:

- trouble breathing and/or it hurts to breathe
- a very bad headache
- very bad pain in your chest, abdomen, or legs
- eye problems (e.g., sudden blurry vision or loss of vision)
- one leg is swollen
- sudden numbness in the face, arms, or legs (often only on one side of the body)
- sudden confusion or trouble understanding what people say to you

What if I forget the ring or it falls out?

If you need help deciding what to do, talk to your health care provider, read the chart below, or go to sexu.ca, click on contraception, and look for *Stay On Schedule*.

If the ring is out for **less than 3 hours**, put it in **right away**. You're still protected from pregnancy.

If the ring has been out **over 3 hours** (or you don't know how long), follow these directions:

Week 1	Week 2 or 3	Week 2 or 3
Started more than 24 hours late or out for more than 3 hours	Out for 3 to 72 hours	Out more than 72 hours or you don't know how long
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put the ring in right away. Keep it in until your next normal removal day. • Use a backup form of birth control (e.g., condoms) or don't have vaginal sex until the ring has been in for 7 days. • Get emergency contraception as soon as possible if your extra method of birth control fails (e.g., condom breaks) or you've had vaginal sex without a condom in the last 5 days. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rinse the ring and put it in right away. Keep it in until your normal removal day. • On the removal day, take out the old ring and put in a new one right away. Don't take the hormone-free days. • Leave the new ring in for 3 weeks. • You might have spotting or miss your period this month. Don't take the ring out. • You're protected from pregnancy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rinse the ring and put it in right away. Keep it in until your normal removal day. • On the removal day, take out the old ring and put in a new one right away. Don't take the hormone-free days. • Leave the new ring in for 3 weeks. • You might have spotting or miss your period this month. Don't take the ring out. • Use an extra method of birth control (e.g., condoms) or don't have vaginal sex until the ring has been in for 7 days. • Get emergency contraception as soon as possible if your extra method of birth control fails (e.g., condom breaks) or you've had vaginal sex without a condom in the last 5 days.

What if I forget to take out the ring?

21 to 27 days	28 to 35 days	More than 35 days
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remove the ring.• Take a 7-day, hormone-free break.• Start a new ring cycle with a new ring schedule.• You're still protected from pregnancy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remove the ring. Put in a new one right away. Don't take the hormone-free break.• Leave the new ring in for 3 weeks.• You might have spotting or miss your period. Don't take the ring out.• You're still protected from pregnancy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remove the ring. Put in a new one right away. Don't take the hormone-free break.• Leave the new ring in for 3 weeks.• You might have spotting or miss your period this month. Don't take the ring out.• Use a backup form of birth control (e.g., condoms) or don't have vaginal sex until the ring has been in for 7 days.• Get emergency contraception as soon as possible if your extra method of birth control fails (e.g., condom breaks) or you've had vaginal sex without a condom in the last 5 days.

Did You Know

- You have the right to decide to have sex or not. Talk with your partner(s) about consent.
- There's an 85% chance of becoming pregnant within one year if no birth control is used for vaginal sex.
- Use a condom/barrier every time you have sex (oral, vaginal, anal). Condoms help prevent pregnancy, STIs, and HIV.
- You can lower your risk of HIV by taking an HIV prevention pill every day. Many Albertans can get it for free. Visit www.prepalberta.ca to find out more.
- Transgender and gender diverse people who have a uterus can use hormonal birth control. It can help prevent pregnancy and make periods lighter and less painful.

Websites

- ahs.ca/srh
- ReadyorNotAlberta.ca
- TeachingSexualHealth.ca
- myhealth.alberta.ca
- sexandu.ca

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at 811.



Scan for more information