

## All About the Birth Control Ring (The Ring)

Clinic Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ 24 Hour emergency phone # \_\_\_\_\_

### What is the birth control ring?

The birth control ring is a thin, flexible, plastic ring that is worn inside the woman's vagina. It contains the hormones estrogen and progestin that go slowly into the woman's body through the tissue in her vagina.

### How does the ring work?

The ring works mostly by keeping a woman's eggs from leaving her ovaries, so that the sperm and egg cannot meet.

### How well does the ring work?

Only about 1 to 8 women out of 100 who use the ring for a year get pregnant.

### How do I use the ring?

- Your clinician will talk to you about when to start using the ring and if you need to use condoms as back up birth control for the first week.
- A ring stays in your vagina for 3 weeks in a row. At the end of 3 weeks you take the ring out and throw it away. (Do not flush it down the toilet.)
- Go 7 days without wearing a ring. (This is when you should get your period.)
- After 1 week without wearing a ring, put in a new ring on the same day of the week as you did before, even if you are still on your period.
- **Never go more than 7 days without wearing a ring. If you do, you could get pregnant. It is important to put a ring in and take it out on the same day of the week and at about the same time of day.**

### To put the ring in your vagina:

1. Wash your hands before and after you put the ring in your vagina.
2. Take the ring out of its package and squeeze the ring between your fingers and thumb until the sides come together.
3. To put the ring in, you can squat, lie down, or stand with one leg up.
4. Gently slide the ring into your vagina. If it is in right you should not notice it, if it feels uncomfortable push it further in. It does not matter where it is in your vagina as long as it is comfortable for you.

### What if I forget to put a ring in on time?

- Put a new ring in as soon as you remember.
- Keep this ring in for 3 weeks.
- Use a second method of birth control (like condoms) until the new ring has been in for 7 days in a row.
- **If you have had sex within the past week, call your clinic and ask about Emergency Contraception Pills (Plan B).**

### What if I forget to take a ring out on time?

If you forget for 7 days or less (the ring has been in for a total of 4 weeks or less), you should still be protected from pregnancy.

Here is what to do:

- Take the ring out as soon as you remember and go 7 days without wearing a ring.
- After 7 days without wearing a ring, put in a new ring and take it out 3 weeks later on the same day of the week that you put it in.
- If you forget for more than 7 days (the ring has been in longer than 4 weeks) **YOU COULD GET PREGNANT!** If that happens, do the following:
  1. **Call the clinic right away for advice and ask about Emergency Contraception Pills (Plan B).**
  2. **Be sure to use a back-up method like condoms until you find out exactly what you need to do.**

### What if the ring slips out?

- Rinse it with cool water (never hot) and put it back in right away. If you can't find your ring, put a new one in right away. Take this new ring out on the same day as you would have removed the lost ring.
- If the ring has been out for more than **3 hours** you may not be protected from pregnancy. Use another form of birth control until the ring has been in the vagina for 7 days.
- If you have had sex within the past week call your clinic right away for advice and ask about Emergency Contraception Pills.

### What if I want to stop using the ring?

You can stop using the ring whenever you want. Just take the ring out and don't put a new one in your vagina. You can become pregnant right away so be sure to use another form of birth control if you don't want to become pregnant.

### What are the side effects? Side effects may be:

- Changes in bleeding. You may miss periods or spot very lightly between periods.
- Headaches that are usually mild. If you get a headache every day, talk to your clinician.
- Increased vaginal discharge or irritation.

### Some women should not use the ring.

- If you smoke and are over the age of 35.
- If you have had blood clots or a stroke.
- If you have been *diagnosed* with migraine headaches.
- If you have high blood pressure, liver problems or certain cancers
- If you have ever had breast cancer.

### What are some other things I should know about the ring?

- The ring does not cause any serious health problems in most women.
- Most men do not feel the ring during sex.
- The ring may protect women from cancer of the ovary and uterus.
- Keep your unused rings in the refrigerator

### Watch for these warning signs.

Call your clinic right away if you have:

- **Abdominal Pain**
- **Chest Pain**
- **Headaches**
- **Eye Problems**
- **Severe leg pain**

**The birth control ring does not protect you from HIV (the AIDS virus) and other diseases you could get from having sex. Use condoms along with the ring to protect yourself from these diseases.**