

# Women's Health

## NuvaRing®

NuvaRing® or “the ring”, is a slender, flexible, transparent vaginal ring, about as big around as a silver dollar. It contains both estrogen and a progestin, which provide its contraceptive effects. After the ring is inserted, it releases a continuous low dose of these hormones into your body. It stays in place comfortably for 3 full weeks, then removed for a one-week ring-free period. A new NuvaRing® is then inserted. Pregnancy protection lasts a full month. Contraceptives that contain both an estrogen and a progestin are called combination hormonal contraceptives. Most studies on combination contraceptives have used oral contraceptives (the Pill). NuvaRing® may have the same risks that have been found for combination oral contraceptives, such as a blood clot, heart attack or stroke.

### Effectiveness

- The NuvaRing® is 99% effective in preventing pregnancy. After 4 weeks of consecutive use, the Ring is no longer considered effective.
- **A woman MUST reinsert a new ring every 4 weeks to maintain protection from pregnancy.**
- The Ring usually becomes effective within a few days of insertion, but use of an additional contraceptive method as back/up for 7 days with the first cycle of Ring use is highly recommended.

### Advantages

- provides highly effective protection against pregnancy
- convenient, does not interfere with intercourse
- lightens menstrual flow
- decreases menstrual cramps in some cases
- reduced risk of PID, endometrial and ovarian cancers
- it's easy to use and private

### Disadvantages

- can cause menstrual cycle irregularities especially during the first cycle
- may cause weight gain, water retention, breast tenderness
- may cause vaginal infections or irritation
- it has to be vaginally inserted and removed
- provides no protection against HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STD's), such as herpes, gonorrhea, syphilis and the HPV virus. Women who have multiple sexual partners or use IV drugs – or whose sexual partners have other partners or use IV drugs – should use condoms even if they rely on the NuvaRing® for pregnancy protection.

### Don't Use NuvaRing® if:

- You smoke. Cigarette smoking increases the risk of serious cardiovascular side effects when you use combination oral contraceptives. This risk increases even more if you are over age 35 and if you smoke 15 or more cigarettes a day. Women who use combination hormonal contraceptives, including NuvaRing®, are strongly advised not to smoke.
- you think you may be pregnant
- you have or have ever had blood clots in your legs, lungs, or eyes
- you have known or suspected breast cancer or cancer of the endometrium, cervix or vagina, now or in the past
- you have unexplained vaginal bleeding
- jaundice during past use of oral contraceptives, or during pregnancy

Women with **any of the following conditions** should be checked often by their doctor or healthcare provider if they choose to use NuvaRing®.

- a family history of breast cancer
- breast nodules, fibrocystic disease, an abnormal breast x-ray or abnormal mammogram
- diabetes
- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol or triglycerides
- headaches or epilepsy
- depression
- gallbladder or kidney disease
- impending major surgery (discuss with your clinician—s/he may want you to stop the patch for awhile to reduce the risk of a possible blood clot)
- any condition that makes the vagina get irritated easily
- prolapsed (dropped) uterus, dropped bladder (cystocele), or rectal prolapse (rectocele)
- severe constipation

### **Possible side effects**

- vaginal infections and irritation
- headache
- nausea
- vaginal discharge (leukorrhea)
- weight gain

In addition to the risks and side effects listed above, users of combination hormonal contraceptives have reported the following side effects:

- vomiting
- abdominal cramps and bloating
- irregular vaginal bleeding or spotting
- temporary infertility after treatment
- spotty darkening of the skin, particularly on the face
- weight changes
- intolerance to contact lenses
- change in appetite
- breast tenderness or enlargement
- changes in menstrual cycle
- fluid retention (edema)
- rash
- depression

### **How should I use NuvaRing®?**

- A complete gyn exam with a documented PAP smear within 6 months prior to starting the Ring
- For the best protection from pregnancy, use NuvaRing® exactly as directed. Insert one NuvaRing® in the vagina and keep it in place for three weeks in a row. Remove it for a one-week break and then insert a new ring. During the one-week break, you will usually have your menstrual period. Your menstrual period will usually start two to three days after the ring is removed and may not have finished before the next ring is inserted. To continue to have pregnancy protection, you must insert the new ring one-week after the last one was removed, even if your menstrual period has not stopped.

### **Points to remember**

*If NuvaRing® slips out:*

Rarely, NuvaRing® can slip out of the vagina if it has not been inserted properly, or while removing a tampon, moving the bowels, straining, or with severe constipation. If NuvaRing® slips out of the vagina, and it has been out less than three hours, you should still be protected from pregnancy. NuvaRing® can be rinsed with cool to lukewarm (not hot) water and should be reinserted as soon as possible, and at the latest within three hours. If you have lost NuvaRing®, you must insert a new NuvaRing® and use it on the same schedule as you would have used the lost ring. If NuvaRing® has been

out of the vagina for more than 3 hours, you may not be adequately protected from pregnancy. NuvaRing® can be rinsed with cool to lukewarm (not hot) water and reinserted as soon as possible. You must use an extra method of birth control, such as male condoms or spermicide, until the NuvaRing® has been in place for seven days in a row. If NuvaRing® slips out repeatedly, you should consult with your healthcare provider.

*If NuvaRing® is in your vagina too long:*

If NuvaRing® has been left in your vagina for an extra week or fewer (four weeks total or less), remove it and insert a new ring after a one-week ring-free break. If NuvaRing® has been left in place for more than four weeks, you may not be adequately protected from pregnancy and you must check to be sure you are not pregnant. You must use an extra method of birth control, such as male condoms or spermicide, until the new NuvaRing® has been in place for seven days in a row.

*If you miss a menstrual period:*

You must check to be sure that you are not pregnant if:

- you miss a period and NuvaRing® was out of the vagina for more than three hours during the three weeks of ring use
- you miss a period and you had waited longer than one week to insert a new ring
- you have followed the instructions and you miss two periods in a row
- you have left NuvaRing® in place for longer than four weeks

### **What to avoid while using NuvaRing®?**

- Do not breast feed while using NuvaRing®. Some of the medicine may pass through the milk to the baby and could cause yellowing of the skin (jaundice) and breast enlargement. NuvaRing® could also decrease the amount and quality of your breast milk.
- The hormones in NuvaRing® can interact with many other medicines and herbal supplements. Tell your healthcare provider about any medicines you are taking, including prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines, herbal remedies, and vitamins.
- The blood levels of the hormones released by NuvaRing® were increased when women used an oil-based vaginal medication (miconazole nitrate) for a yeast infection while NuvaRing® was in place. The pregnancy protection of NuvaRing® is not likely to be changed by use of these products. The blood levels of the hormones released by NuvaRing® were not changed when women used vaginal, water-based spermicides (nonoxynol or N-9 products) along with NuvaRing®.
- While using NuvaRing®, you should not rely upon a diaphragm when you need a back-up method of birth control because NuvaRing® may interfere with the correct placement and position of a diaphragm.
- If you are scheduled for any laboratory tests, tell your doctor or healthcare provider you are using NuvaRing®. Contraceptive hormones may change certain blood tests results.

### **Other information**

- Place the used ring in the reclosable foil pouch and properly dispose of it in a waste receptacle out of the reach of children and pets.
- Store NuvaRing® at room temperature, 25°C (77°F). Temperatures can be from 59–86°F (15–30°C). Avoid direct sunlight or storing above 86°F (30°C).