

# How to use the contraceptive ring

## Information for patients

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Insert your first vaginal ring on the day you take misoprostol - unless advised differently by your doctor or nurse. You will be protected from pregnancy immediately. If you delay starting your vaginal ring for more than 5 days after your procedure, then you must use condoms or abstain from sex for 7 days after the ring is inserted. You will then be protected against pregnancy.

If you do not start using your vaginal ring as above and have unprotected sex, you may require emergency contraception. Please contact your GP, local pharmacy or Chalmers Sexual Health Centre for advice. Tel: 0131 536 1070.

Insert the ring into your vagina and push it gently towards the top of the vagina, it should sit in a similar place to a tampon.

Remove the vaginal ring after 21 days and insert a new one, each ring is used for 21 days maximum.

## Tailored methods of using the ring

- **Standard Use (21/4 or 21/7)**

Use the vaginal ring for 21 days (3 weeks) and then have a 4 or 7 day break before inserting a new vaginal ring. You will usually have a withdrawal bleed. Insert a new vaginal ring on either the fifth or eighth day even if you are still bleeding.

- **Continuous Use**

Use the vaginal ring for 21 days and then replace immediately with another ring with no break. You won't have a withdrawal bleed but might experience some bleeding. Any bleeding you get is likely to reduce over time. If you can't wait for the bleeding to settle down, then try flexible extended use of the vaginal ring (see below).

- **Flexible extended use**

Use the vaginal ring for 21 days. Insert a new vaginal ring every 21 days until bleeding occurs for 3-4 days in a row and then remove the vaginal ring for 4 days. Restart with a new vaginal ring day on the fifth day even if you are still bleeding and use for 21 days. Only stop for a 4-day break if you have bleeding or 3-4 days in a row and you have been using a vaginal ring for at least 21 days.

- **Extended Use (63/4 or 63/7)**

Change your vaginal ring every 21 days for 9 weeks (three rings used in total) and then have a ring free break for either 4 or 7 days. You will usually have a withdrawal bleed during this ring-free break. Apply a new vaginal ring on the fifth or eighth day even if you are still bleeding.

## If you forget to start a ring at the end of the ring free week

Start a new vaginal ring as soon as you remember. If you are more than 48 hours (2 days) late, use condoms/abstain for 7 days. If you have had unprotected sex during the last few days, you may need to use emergency contraception.

## What to do if the vaginal ring falls out

If the vaginal ring falls out, you can rinse it in cold to lukewarm water (not hot water) and reinsert it. If the vaginal ring is out for less than 3 hours, you do not need to worry it will still protect you from pregnancy. If it is out for longer than 3 hours, you will need to use condoms for 7 days and may need to use emergency contraception.

## Other medicines

Certain medicines, including the herbal remedy St John's Wort, may make the vaginal ring less effective. When other medicines are prescribed for you, check with your GP whether or not it will be necessary to use condoms. Vomiting and diarrhoea will not affect the working of the vaginal ring.

## Safer sex

The vaginal ring does not protect you from sexually transmitted infection. Use condoms with new partners and test regularly.

## If you have any problems, do not hesitate to contact us.

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Edinburgh  
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Tel 0131 536 1070

Gynaecology Outpatients  
OPD 3  
St John's Hospital  
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