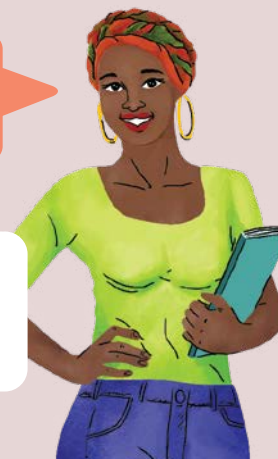


# Answering Your Questions – The Ring



Hi! I'm an HIV Prevention Ambassador.  
Do you have any questions about the ring?



*What is the ring?*

The ring is a flexible silicone ring that contains the ARV dapivirine and provides protection from HIV. The ring is inserted into the vagina and worn for a full month, and then replaced with a new ring. It is designed to be easily inserted and removed by the user.

*How does it work?*

The ring slowly releases dapivirine into the vagina over the course of the month. Dapivirine works by stopping HIV from making copies of itself in the body. Because HIV cannot replicate in the body, the virus dies.

*How effective is it?*

If you wear the ring continuously and replace it each month, the ring can provide 50% or more protection from HIV. It takes about 24 hours after insertion for the ring to provide maximum protection from HIV, and dapivirine quickly leaves the body after removal. Therefore, it is important to use a back-up form of HIV protection, for example a condom or abstaining from sex, for the first 24 hours, and keep the ring inserted at all times.

*Is the ring right for me?*

That's your decision. It's your body, so it's your choice! You might consider the ring if you are having unprotected sex and want to protect yourself from HIV. You may choose to use the ring if you cannot get or use oral PrEP. It is also a discreet option that no one has to know about! The ring only needs to be used during times in your life when you are vulnerable to HIV.

*Will the ring protect me from other STIs and pregnancy?*

No! The ring will not prevent other STIs or pregnancy. It's best to use condoms (with water-based lubricant, when possible) and other contraception with the ring to prevent infections and pregnancy and to increase protection from HIV. The ring can be used with almost any method of family planning except the contraceptive ring.

*Are there any side effects?*

The ring is just like any other medication. Some people experience side effects, like changes in vaginal wetness or odour, or itching, but these are usually mild and go away after a few days without removing the ring. If you experience vaginal changes while using the ring, it is important to visit your health care provider to make sure these are not symptoms of an STI.

*Can I use the ring if I am taking other medications, or if I drink or use recreational drugs?*

The ring is safe to use with alcohol and drugs. The medication in the ring when released stays local to the vaginal area; the medication does not circulate throughout the body. But make sure to keep yourself safe when drinking or using drugs. If you're having sex, make sure to use condoms (with water-based lubricant, when possible) and contraception to protect yourself from other STIs and pregnancy.

*Should I take the ring out for sex, bathing or during menses (monthly menstruation/bleeding)?*

The ring is designed to be kept in all the time and will only provide protection if worn consistently.

The ring does not need to be taken out to be cleaned. The vagina is a self-cleaning environment.

The ring will not affect frequency of menses, length or amount of bleeding. It is safe to use tampons or a menstrual cup with the ring, and the ring will not block the flow of blood. Menstrual bleeding may change the color of the ring but this is ok and will not change the ring's ability to protect from HIV.

The ring does not affect a women's libido (sex drive). Most men do not feel the ring during sex. Some men and women even report that the increased vaginal wetness increases sexual pleasure!

*What do I need to do if I want to use the ring?*

The first step is to see a health care provider. They will help you take the next steps.