

Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust: providing regional integrated contraception and sexual health services (working in partnership with Terrence Higgins Trust in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk and with Brook in Bedfordshire.)

Firstly..

How does the ring prevent pregnancy?

The hormones in the ring stop you releasing an egg each month. **No egg - no pregnancy!**

What about other benefits?

There are many! One of the commonest is how it affects your bleeding. Most women bleed less and very importantly, the ring allows you to control when you bleed.

And next..

How do I use it?

The **standard way** is to use one ring for 3 weeks followed by a 7 day ring free break. You will have a bleed in the week off. Insert a new ring on the 8th day. This will be the same day of the week on which you inserted your first ring.

But..

Can't I get pregnant in the week off?

No, it's perfectly safe to have unprotected sex in your week off so long as you've **used your ring correctly** and remember to **insert a new ring at the right time**. Forgetting to restart **makes your break more than 7 days and is risky**.

So..

How can I make sure my ring is as effective as possible?

The simple answer is to have fewer and shorter breaks! You could try the **fixed extended way**: use 3 rings in a row (each for 3 weeks) followed by a 4 day break, then another 3 rings followed by a 4 day break and so on. You will bleed every 9 weeks.

OR, even easier, you could try the **flexible extended way**: simply insert a new ring every 3 weeks and take your breaks when you start to bleed. When you have 3 days of bleeding in a row (not just spotting), remove your ring for 4 days then restart and simply continue until your next bleed. **Just make sure that you use your ring for at least 21 days** (replacing it every 3 weeks).

OR, easiest of all, use your ring **continuously** by replacing it every 3 weeks with no ring free breaks and whether or not you bleed.

But..

Are the extended and continuous ways safe?

Yes, your doctor or nurse will have checked that the ring is right for you. The **standard** way gives you a regular monthly bleed as you would have without the ring. However, **there is no medical reason why women need a monthly bleed**. The latest evidence and expert guidance tells us that the **extended** and **continuous** ways of using the ring are just as safe even though you will use more rings than with the standard way.

And finally..

What are the extra benefits?

Using the **extended** or **continuous** ways reduces the number of bleeds you have. This is really helpful if you bleed heavily, have a tendency to become anaemic or have pain or other symptoms associated with your bleeds. These new ways also put you in control – you don't have to have a bleed if it's not a convenient time for you.

Which way will you choose?

	Ring days	Ring FREE days	
STANDARD	21	7	21 7
Choose this if	You are new to the ring and want to establish a routine first You want a regular bleed every 4 weeks Your bleeds don't bother you AND You are a very reliable ring user		
FIXED EXTENDED	63	4	63 4
FLEXIBLE EXTENDED	Any number - at least 21 🩸🩸🩸	4	Any number - at least 21 🩸🩸🩸
CONTINUOUS	Take a pill every day with no breaks even if you bleed 🩸🩸🩸		
Choose one of these if	You worry about remembering to insert a new ring after a break You want to reduce your bleeding and associated symptoms You have previously become pregnant using the the patch, combined pill or ring		