

6 Things to Consider About Smart Rings Before Buying

Although still quite limited at the moment, smart rings are likely to become popular.

The Oura Ring has amassed a loyal following, to the point where there are now several competing products on the market. Furthermore, Samsung is also launching the Galaxy Ring in 2024, and even Apple is rumored to be working on a smart ring despite the success of the Apple Watch.

You may want to give this exciting new product a try, but there are a few factors to consider before you make your decision. A smart ring might be ideal -- but you could also use a regular wrist-worn tracker or even a chest or arm strap. It all depends on your situation.

1. What do you want in a smart ring?



You might be tempted to buy a smart ring as a fashion accessory, but that would be a mistake.

Most smart rings are geared toward health and fitness, such as recording sleep patterns, heart rate, blood oxygen, and/or body temperature. Some allow for payments or other NFC (near-field communication) functionality, potentially bypassing health and fitness features altogether. Figure out your main reason for buying a smart ring and buy something that best fits that criteria. If you're looking for an accessory that can do it all, you'll probably want to go with a high-end smartwatch from Apple or Garmin.

2. Smart rings are not as durable as regular rings



Some rings use metals like titanium for the exterior, and they'll be durable enough for most activities. But not all rings are. Because they have electronics inside, it's important to make sure your ring is waterproof if you plan on wearing it while swimming, in the rain, or showering. Always avoid exposing your smart ring to chemicals like harsh detergents, remembering that even bath soap can wear down the waterproof coating after enough time.

If you're doing construction work or other heavy manual labor, you may need to temporarily remove your smart ring to avoid scratching or denting it. In fact, if you're into weightlifting, you should automatically opt for a tracker that's worn on your wrist, arm, or chest. As a rule of thumb, it also takes some time to adjust to the grip and maintain strength. Some people may find it uncomfortable, especially if they're wearing a wedding band.

3. You need a measuring tool



If a company offers a plastic sizing kit specifically for their product, order it, even if it costs a small fee. Like any ring, a smart ring needs to be tight enough to stay put while still being comfortable. You don't want to spend hundreds of dollars and wait days to receive a ring that doesn't fit. Because of the components inside, it's also likely that a smart ring won't fit the size of any regular ring you wear.

Once you receive your sizing kit, try on any sample ring for at least 24 hours, regardless of how comfortable it feels at first. This will account for regular swelling and shrinking, and give you an idea of what it will feel like to wear your smart ring around the clock.

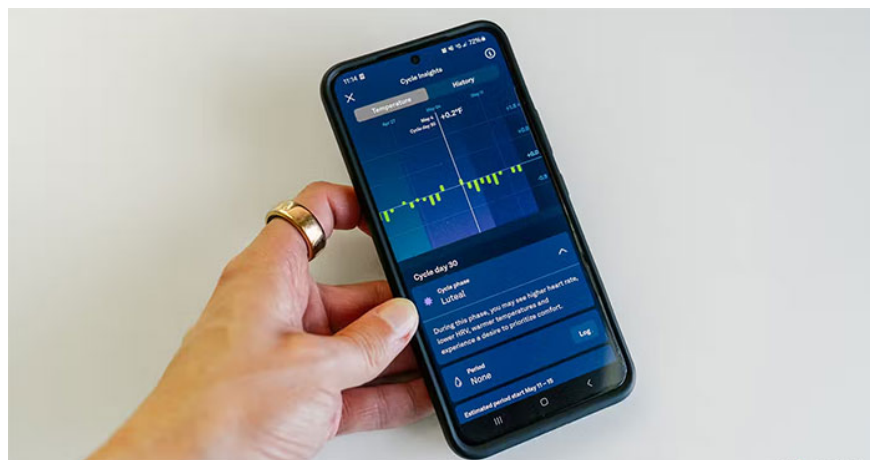
4. Your ring may not fit forever.



Regardless of your starting measurements, your body size can change over the course of a few years, sometimes even just a few months. Say you buy a fitness-oriented ring to help you burn fat. If you're successful, that ring may start to feel loose before the warranty expires. Conversely, if you suddenly become sedentary, it may start to feel horribly tight.

This may not be a big deal when people tend to upgrade their tech every few years, but it's worth considering. This is another area where wrist-worn devices have the upper hand – interchangeable straps allow for up or down sizing, and some are stretchy enough that size doesn't matter.

5. Are you willing to pay for a subscription?



While some people may like Oura, the company charges a subscription fee if you want to take full advantage of its data tracking and analytics features. That means a \$300 ring could end up costing you closer to \$500 or more, depending on how long you plan to use it. There are some features that don't require a plan, but you might as well buy a lower-end Fitbit at that point.

Luckily, it's not hard to find a ring that doesn't require a subscription, like the Ultrahuman Ring Air. Just be aware of subscription traps when you're shopping. Subscriptions can be worth it, but only if you're really invested in your practice or trying to self-diagnose a chronic problem, like poor sleep habits.

6. You will need your smartphone



While the compact form factor of smart rings is part of their appeal, it comes with a trade-off. You can't control settings or check your recorded data right on the device, so you'll likely pull out your phone more often. That's especially true if you're into working out. Sometimes the ring will detect workouts automatically, and sometimes it won't, so don't be surprised if you often have to manually trigger or edit workouts.

One of the great things about wearables with screens is that they can reduce your dependence on your phone, whether by showing you the time, health data, and notifications, or by providing some basic apps on your wrist, like messaging and music playback. All of that is gone with smart rings, so you might want to save up for a smartwatch.

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