

Patch Fact Sheet

24-hour Emergency Number/Location

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- ❖ **What is** the patch?
- ❖ How do I **use** it?
- ❖ How do I **get** it?
- ❖ How **effective** is it?
- ❖ **Advantages** of the patch
- ❖ **Drawbacks** of the patch

SOURCES:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- ❖ [Unintended Pregnancy Prevention: Contraception](#)

[Contraceptive Technology](#), Robert A. Hatcher, MD, MPH et al., 20th revised edition, Contraceptive Technology Communications Inc., 2011

Food and Drug Administration

- ❖ [Birth Control Guide](#)

Office on Women's Health

- ❖ [Girlshealth.gov: Types of Birth Control](#)



U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

What is the patch?

The patch is a thin, beige plastic square about two inches across that looks like a Band-aid. It contains progestin and estrogen—hormones found in most birth control pills. Hormones are chemicals that control how different parts of your body work. The patch has a sticky side that can be attached to the skin of the stomach, buttocks, back or upper outer arm.

The hormones in the patch are absorbed through the skin and prevent pregnancy by keeping the ovaries from releasing eggs. The patch also works by causing the cervical mucus to thicken, which blocks sperm from meeting and fertilizing an egg.

The patch is sold under the brand name Ortho Evra.



How do I use it?

You put a new patch on each week for three weeks (take off the old patch and throw it away). During the fourth week, you do not wear a patch and your period will probably start. After the fourth week, start over again and put on a new patch (even if there is still some bleeding from your period).

- ❖ To help you remember, try to put a new patch on the same day each week.
- ❖ Put the patch on clean, dry skin and press to make sure it will stay on. Be careful not to touch the sticky side while putting it on your skin.
- ❖ Look each day to make sure the patch is still in place.
- ❖ It is okay to bathe and swim while wearing a patch.

If the patch comes loose or falls off, you may need to use another method of birth control, like a condom.

Discuss your medical history with your health care provider before using the patch and let him/her know if you develop any side effects.



U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201



How do I get it?

You need a prescription. The patch can be purchased at pharmacies and is also available at some clinics. To search for a family planning clinic near you, go to

<http://www.hhs.gov/opa/>

How effective is it?

Of 100 women who use this method each year, about nine may get pregnant.

The risk of pregnancy is much less for women who use the patch correctly (putting it on the skin the same time each week). The patch may be less effective in women who weigh more than 198 pounds. It may also not work as well for women who take certain antibiotics or the supplement St. John's Wort.

Talk with your health care provider if you have any questions about using the patch.



Advantages of the patch

- ❖ Easy to use and does not require the consent of a partner.
- ❖ Safe and works well to prevent pregnancy. Using the patch means you do not have to think about birth control when you want to have sex.
- ❖ You can see the patch and be reassured it's still there.
- ❖ May make your periods lighter and more regular.
- ❖ May reduce menstrual cramps and acne, and strengthen bones.
- ❖ May also reduce the risk of developing non-cancerous breast tumors and some cancers that affect reproductive organs.



U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201



Drawbacks of the patch

- ❖ Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.
- ❖ Requires a visit to a health care provider and a prescription.
- ❖ Certain antibiotics and supplements, such as St. John's Wort, may make the birth control patch less effective.
- ❖ It may take a month or two after stopping the patch before normal periods return.
- ❖ Some women experience skin irritation where the patch is worn. Others may have breast tenderness.
- ❖ It exposes users to higher levels of estrogen compared to most combined oral contraceptives (birth control pills).
- ❖ It is not known if serious risks, such as blood clots and strokes, are greater with the patch due to the greater exposure to estrogen.



Quick Facts

Effectiveness in Preventing Pregnancy

- ❖ Of 100 women who use this method each year, about nine may get pregnant.
- ❖ The risk is smaller in women who use the patch correctly (and apply it to the skin at the right time).

Use

- ❖ You put on a new patch and take off the old patch once a week for three weeks.
- ❖ During the fourth week, you do not wear a patch and your period will probably begin.

STI Protection

- ❖ No

Visit to Health Care Provider Needed?

- ❖ Yes, prescriptions are required for the patch.

All material contained in this fact sheet is free of copyright restrictions, and may be copied, reproduced, or duplicated without permission of the Office of Population Affairs in the Department of Health and Human Services. Citation of the source is appreciated.

Content last updated: 12/27/2012



U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201