

CONTRACEPTIVE PATCH

Patient Information Fact Sheet

›What is a contraceptive patch?

The contraceptive patch is a thin plastic square that contains the same hormones, progestin and estrogen found in most birth control pills. Currently there is only one transdermal contraceptive patch approved called Ortho Evra (**norelgestromin, ethinyl estradiol**). The patch has a sticky side that can be attached to the skin of the stomach, buttocks, or the outside of the upper arm. The patch can also be placed on the front or back of the upper body like the shoulder blade or chest area but not on the breasts.

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.

›How effective is a contraceptive patch?

Five out of 100 women, who use the patch each year, are likely to get pregnant. However the risk is smaller in women who use the patch correctly. The patch must be applied to the skin at the correct time.

›What are the advantages?

- Safe and effective in preventing pregnancy
- Do not have to think about birth control when you want to have sex
- Periods may be lighter when using the ring
- Fewer menstrual cramps, less acne, and stronger bones
- May reduce risk of developing non-cancerous breast tumors or other cancers that affect reproductive organs

›What are the disadvantages?

- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Certain antibiotics and supplements may make the patch less effective
- May take 1–2 months after stopping the patch before normal periods return
- May experience skin irritation or breast tenderness

›How is the contraceptive patch used?

A new patch is placed on the skin each week for 3 weeks. During the fourth week, if the patch is not worn, menstruation will most likely begin. After the fourth week, start over again and put on a new patch, even if there is still some bleeding from your period.



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To help you remember, try to put a new patch on the same day each week. Place 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. The patch can be worn when bathing and swimming.

›What if the patch application or detachment is delayed <48 hours?

When delaying the application or detachment of a patch <48 hours since a patch should have been applied or reattached, apply a new patch as soon as possible. If detachment occurred <24 hours since the patch was applied, try to reapply the patch or replace with a new patch. Keep the same patch change day. No additional contraceptive protection is needed. Emergency contraception is not usually needed but can be considered if delayed application or detachment occurred earlier in the cycle or in the last week of the previous cycle.

›What if the patch application or detachment is delayed ≥48 hours?

When delaying the application or detachment of a patch ≥48 hours since a patch should have been applied or reattached, apply a new patch as soon as possible. Keep the same patch change day. Use back-up contraception (eg, condoms) or avoid sexual intercourse until a patch has been worn for 7 consecutive days. If the delayed application or detachment occurred in the third patch week omit the hormone-free week by finishing the third week of patch use (keeping the same patch change day) and starting a new patch immediately. If unable to start a new patch immediately, use back-up contraception (eg, condoms) or avoid sexual intercourse until a new patch has been worn for 7 consecutive days.

Emergency contraception should be considered if the delayed application or detachment occurred within the first week of patch use and unprotected sexual intercourse occurred in the previous 5 days. Emergency contraception may also be considered at other times as appropriate.

›Further information:

Centers of Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr6205.pdf
U.S. Department of health & Human Services:
www.hhs.gov/opa/reproductive-health/contraception/patch/

Created July 2013