

All About the Birth Control Patch (The Patch)

Clinic Phone # _____ 24 Hour emergency phone # _____

What is the birth control patch?

The birth control patch is a small patch a woman wears on her skin to keep her from getting pregnant. It contains the same two hormones in it as the birth control pill (estrogen and progestin). The hormones go through the woman's skin into her body slowly.

How does the patch work?

The patch works mostly by keeping a woman's eggs from leaving her ovaries.

How well does the patch work?

The patch is very good at keeping a woman from getting pregnant.

Only about 1 to 8 women out of 100 who use the patch for a year get pregnant.

How do I use the patch?

To put the patch on:

1. The patch can be worn on your upper arm stomach, hip, or buttock, or on your back. Never wear it on your breast or the inside of your upper arm.
2. Make sure your hands and the skin where you are going to place the patch is clean and dry.
3. Take the patch out of its foil package.
4. Peel off half of the patch's sticky liner and press the sticky part of the patch onto your skin.
5. Peel off the rest of the liner and press the rest of the patch onto your skin, pressing the edges of the patch down.
6. Press the palm of your hand over the patch for 10 seconds.

When to put the patch on:

Start using the patch on the day your clinician suggests. There are two common ways:

1. You can start on the first day of your last period. The patch will start working right away to keep you from getting pregnant.
2. You can start on the first Sunday after your period begins. If Sunday is not the first day of your period, the patch will not keep you from getting pregnant right away and you will need to use another form of birth control (like condoms) along with the patch for one week.

You will replace the patch with a new patch each week for 3 weeks. Change the patch on the same day each week. During the 4th week you will wear no patch at all. This is when you will have your period, and you will still be protected from pregnancy during this week.

Go a full seven days without a patch and then start again with a new patch even if your period isn't over.

What if a patch comes loose or falls off?

- **If it has been less than 24 hours:**
Try to stick the patch back on. If it won't stick smoothly, throw it away and put on a new patch. Change the patch on your usual day. You are still protected from pregnancy.
- **If it has been off or loose for 24 hours or more call the clinic for advice.**

What if I forget to change my patch on the right day?

- Put a new patch on and call the clinic right away for advice.
- ***If you forgot to change your patch and you have had sex within the last seven days, call the clinic right away and ask about Emergency Contraception Pills.***

What if I want to stop using the patch?

- You can stop using the patch anytime.
- If you do stop using it you can become pregnant right away, so be sure to use another birth control method if you do not want to become pregnant.

What about the side effects of the patch?

Some common side effects **may be:**

- Tender or full breasts
- Changes in bleeding; you may miss periods or have spotting.
- Nausea
- Mood changes
- Rash

Some women should not use the patch:

- If you have had blood clots or stroke.
- If you have been *diagnosed* with migraine headaches.
- If you have high blood pressure, liver problems, or certain cancers.
- You have had breast cancer.
- You smoke and are over the age of 35.

What are some other things I should know about the patch?

- It does not cause any serious problems in most women, but recent information says that women using the patch have a higher chance of getting serious blood clots than women using the pill.
- It does not interrupt having sex.
- The patch may protect women from cancer of the ovary and uterus.

Watch for these warning signs.

Call your clinic right away if you have:

- *Abdominal Pain*
- *Chest pain*
- *Headaches*
- *Eye Problems*
- *Severe leg pain*

The birth control patch does not protect you from HIV (the AIDS virus) and other diseases you could get from having sex. Use condoms along with the pill to protect yourself from these diseases.