

FACTS ABOUT THE CONTRACEPTIVE PATCH

What is the contraceptive patch?

The contraceptive patch is a thin, beige, plastic patch that sticks on the skin to prevent pregnancy. The patch is easy to use. You only have to think about birth control once a week.

How does the patch work and does it work well?

Like birth control pills, the patch works by releasing female hormones (estrogen and progestin) in your body. These hormones prevent pregnancy in the following ways:

- By keeping the eggs from leaving the ovaries (ovulation) that could be fertilized by a man's sperm
- Thickens the cervical mucus making it more difficult for sperm to get to the egg
- By keeping a fertilized egg from attaching to the uterus

When used correctly, the patch is about 91%-94% effective. However, the patch can be less effective in women who are at or above 198 pounds. Also, some medicines and herbal products may make the patch less effective, including:

- Barbituates
- Bosentan (Tracleer)
- Carbamazepine (Tegretol, Equetro)
- Felbamate (Felbatol)
- Griseofulvin (Fulvicin, GrifulvinV, Gris-Peg, Grisactin)
- Oxcarbazepine (Trileptal)
- Phenytoin (Dilantin)
- Rifampin (Rifadin)
- St. John's Wort
- Topiramate (Topamax)

Is there anyone who should not use the patch? *You should not use the patch if:*

- You are pregnant or think you might be.
- You get migraine headaches with aura.
- You have certain inherited blood clotting disorders.
- You have ever had a heart attack, stroke, blood clots or angina.
- You have ever had liver or breast cancer.
- You have uncontrolled high blood pressure.
- You have very bad diabetes.
- You have serious liver disease (eyeballs are yellow).
- You should not use the patch during prolonged bed rest.

Smoking increases your risk of serious side effects. Women who use birth control methods with hormones should not smoke. This includes electronic cigarettes.

What are the possible side effects of the patch?

The most common side effects of the patch are similar to the birth control pill and include breast tenderness, nausea and vomiting, headache, irritation on the skin where the patch is located, and irregular bleeding.

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How do you use the patch?

There are two ways to start the patch:

1. **Quick Start:** Put on your first patch as soon as you get the pack. **OR**
2. **Next Period:** Put on your first patch on the first day of your next period.

If you put on your first patch *up to 5 days after the start of your period*, you are protected against pregnancy **right away**.

If you put on your first patch *more than 5 days after the start of your period*, you should **use condoms as backup for the first 7 days**.

- Place one patch on a clean dry area of your buttock, abdomen, upper outer arm or upper torso, in a place where it will not be rubbed by tight clothing. Make sure the edges of the patch stick well. Do not put the patch on your breasts or chest area.
- You will use a new patch every week for 3 consecutive weeks and no patch for the 4th week.
- You will not wear a patch during week four and you should expect your period during this time.
- Rotate sites where patch is applied.
- Do not wear make-up, creams, lotions, powders or other topical products where the patch is placed.
- Remember: Remove the old patch and apply the new patch. Every new patch should be applied on the *same day of the week* for three consecutive weeks.

What if I stopped using the patch and had unprotected sex?

Take Emergency Contraception (EC) right away. EC can prevent pregnancy up to 5 days after sex, and it works better the sooner you take it. You can get EC at the pharmacy without a prescription or at your county health department family planning clinic or doctor's office.

Can I breastfeed my baby while using the patch?

No. Nursing mothers should not use the patch until they have completely weaned their child.

Where can I get the patch?

You need a prescription. You can get the patch at the pharmacy or the health department family planning clinic.

REMEMBER:

- The patch does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Protect yourself; use a latex or vinyl condom every time you have oral, vaginal or anal sex.