



Contraceptive Patch

What is the contraceptive patch?

The patch is a thin, beige, flexible square you wear on your body. Each patch is worn for one week at a time.

How does the patch work?

In a normal cycle, hormones cause the ovaries to release an egg about once a month. The patch contains two types of hormones—estrogen and progestin.

The applied patch releases hormones through the skin into the blood to stop the ovaries from releasing an egg. Mucus in the cervix thickens, making it difficult for sperm to enter the uterus.

How effective is it?

The patch is about 99 per cent effective in preventing pregnancy when used correctly. It does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). You need to use a condom every time you have sex to help protect you from STIs.

How do I use the patch?

- Always apply your patch to clean, dry skin.
- Apply the patch during the first 24 hours of the start of your menstrual period. If applied at this time, it is effective immediately. If you start your first patch at any other time you must use backup birth control such as condoms for the first seven days. Whatever day you first apply the patch is called your “patch change day.”
- Wear the patch continuously for seven days. On the patch change day, remove the patch and apply a new one. Leave this patch on for seven days.
- On the next patch change day, remove this patch and apply another. This means you wear a new patch each week for three weeks. At the end of week three remove your patch on the patch change day.
- Do not wear a patch during week four. Your period should start during this week.
- At the end of week four, begin the next four-week cycle by applying a new patch on your normal

patch change day, no matter when your period begins or ends.

- Check your patch every day to make sure it has not come loose. Do not try to move the patch from one place to another during the week.
- Do not decorate or cut the patch.
- Fold the patch in half and dispose in the garbage out of the reach of children and pets.

Where do I put the patch?

Your patch can be applied to your abdomen, buttocks, upper outer arms or your upper body (not on your breasts). On your patch change day you can place the patch on a different area of the body.

What if the patch becomes loose or comes off?

- The patch sticks well even during swimming or exercise but it can come loose. Avoid using lotion on or near the skin where you plan to wear the patch.
- If the patch has been loose or off for less than 24 hours, try to reapply it. If it does not stick well, remove it and put on a new patch. Change this patch on your regular patch change day.
- If the patch has been loose or off for more than 24 hours you could become pregnant. Start a new four-week cycle right away. Use backup birth control such as condoms for the first seven days. If you had unprotected sex during this time, contact the Sexual Health Clinic, your health care provider or a pharmacist to discuss the need for the emergency contraceptive pill (ECP).

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Who can you talk to if you have more questions?

If you have concerns or questions call and ask for Sexual Health, or visit our youth website at www.thephakz.ca, or the health unit website below.



Tel: 721-7520
Toll free: 1-877-721-7520
www.simcoemuskokahealth.org

Your Health Connection

What if I forget to change the patch?

- *Without a patch for less than 24 hours:* Reapply or replace with a new patch immediately. Keep the same patch change day and continue until the end of the three week cycle.
- *During week one:*

Without a patch for 24 hours or more, apply a new patch immediately, keep the same patch change day and continue until the end of the three-week cycle. Use condoms for the rest of the cycle. If you have unprotected sex within the first five days, contact the Sexual Health Clinic, your health care provider or a pharmacist to discuss the need for ECP.
- *During week two or three:*

Without a patch for 24 hours or more, apply a new patch as soon as you remember. On your patch change day, change your patch as usual. At the end of the cycle start a new package without a break. Use condoms for seven days.

Without a patch for more than 72 hours, and unprotected sex within five days, contact the Sexual Health Clinic, your health care provider or a pharmacist to discuss the need for ECP.
- If you forget to take your patch off refer to the product insert or contact the Sexual Health Clinic, your health care provider or a pharmacist.

What are the advantages to using the patch?

You may notice lighter and shorter periods and a more regular cycle. You may also experience less menstrual cramping and less acne.

Some benefits occur the longer you are on the patch, such as **decreased** risk of:

- cancer of the ovaries or lining of the uterus
- pelvic inflammatory disease and endometriosis
- cysts in the ovaries and breasts
- tubal pregnancy
- anemia from low iron levels.

What are the side effects or possible complications?

The most common side effects include: breast tenderness, headaches, nausea, painful periods,

and skin irritation where the patch is worn. These side effects will likely go away after the first two or three months. If you are worried, contact the Sexual Health Clinic, your health care provider or a pharmacist.

Serious side effects are rare, but there is a risk of blood clots, stroke or heart attack with any hormonal contraception.

Seek medical attention immediately if you notice any of the following:

- severe pain in your legs or abdomen
- severe chest pain, cough or shortness of breath
- blurring or loss of vision, speech problems
- breast lump
- depression or jaundice (yellowing of the skin).

Are there times when the patch may not be effective?

Yes.

- Many prescription, non-prescription and herbal medicines can interfere with the patch. Always check with the Sexual Health Clinic, your health care provider or a pharmacist before taking another medication. You may need to use a backup method of birth control while you are on the medication and for seven days after you finish taking it.
- If you have unprotected sex during the time that the patch is not effective, contact the Sexual Health Clinic, your health care provider or a pharmacist to discuss the need for ECP.

What else do I need to know?

- It is important to have a yearly physical while you are on the patch.
- The patch may be less effective in women who weigh more than 90 kg (198 lbs) or have a basal metabolic Index (BMI) of 30 or more.
- Women who use hormonal contraceptives are strongly advised not to smoke. Cigarette smoking can increase the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease and blood clots. The risk increases with age.

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