

---

### ▶ **What is the patch?**

The patch is a thin, flexible square you wear on your skin. It continuously releases the artificial hormones estrogen and progestin into your bloodstream through your skin.

---

### ▶ **How does the patch work?**

The patch prevents pregnancy by:

- stopping the ovaries from releasing an egg
- causing mucus in the cervix to thicken making it harder for sperm to enter the uterus
- causing the lining of the uterus to get thinner making it hard for the fertilized egg to attach

---

### ▶ **What are the advantages of the patch?**

- 99% effective in preventing pregnancy if used correctly (92-97% effective with typical use). The patch may not be effective in women who weigh 200 pounds or more, or who have a BMI of 30 or more.
- You only need to remember the patch once a week
- Lighter, shorter, more regular periods
- Less cramping with your periods
- Improvement in acne
- Lower risk of cysts of the ovaries or breasts and of cancer of the ovaries or the lining of the uterus
- Lower risk of endometriosis, tubal pregnancy and anemia

---

### ▶ **What are the possible side effects or risks?**

Side effects from the patch most often occur in the first 3 months. Unless side effects are severe, it is best to continue using the patch for 3 months before you think about a change in birth control.

### **Some possible side effects:**

- Spotting or bleeding between periods
- Skin irritation where the patch is worn (you may find baby oil helps remove any adhesive that sticks to your skin)
- Breast tenderness
- Nausea
- Headaches (if severe or more frequent than usual call your health care provider or the clinic).

---

### **CAUTION**

#### ▶ **Seek medical attention at once if you notice any of the following:**

- Severe pain in your legs or abdomen
- Severe chest pain, cough and/or shortness of breath
- Blurring or loss of vision, speech problems
- Depression
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin).

---

### ▶ **How do I use the patch?**

- Apply your first patch during the first 24 hours of the start of your next period.
- Unlike the pill, which has to be taken every day, each patch is worn for 7 days. One patch is worn each week for 3 weeks. The patch should be changed on the same day each week (called the "Patch Change Day"). The fourth week is patch-free and you should get your period at some point during this week.
- You can apply the patch to your abdomen, buttocks, upper outer arms or your upper body (not on your breasts).
- Apply the patch to clean, dry skin, avoiding areas that are irritated, sunburned or infected.
- Keep the patch in place for 7 days. Check every day to be sure it is not loose. On day 7, remove the patch, fold it in half with the medication side folded in and throw it in the garbage.
- Apply a new patch to a different area. Wear it for 7 days, then remove it, throw it away and apply

another patch to a different area and wear it for the next 7 days.

- During week 4, do not wear a patch. You will begin your period at some point this week.
- At the end of week 4, start the cycle again by applying a new patch on the same day of the week that you applied your other patches, no matter when your period begins or ends.

---

### ▶ **Are there times the patch may not be effective?**

Yes, you should use condoms for additional protection:

- When waiting to start the patch
- If you are taking certain medications (prescription or over-the-counter) you may need to use condoms during treatment and for 7 days after you finish your medication. Always check with your health care provider or pharmacist to be sure.
- If you have unprotected sex during a time when the patch might not be effective, contact the Sexual Health clinic, your health care provider or pharmacist about the need for emergency contraception.
- The patch may be less effective in women who weigh 200 pounds or more, or who have a basal metabolic rate (BMI) of 30 or more.

---

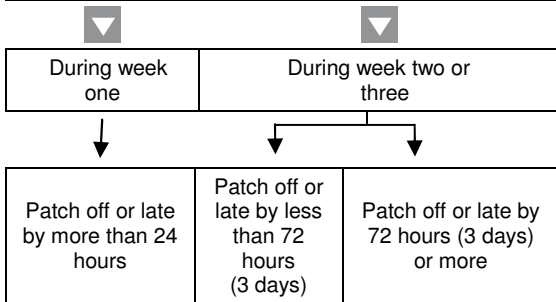
### ▶ **What if the patch becomes loose or comes off?**




- If the patch has been loose or off for less than 24 hours, try to reapply it by pressing the edges down with your hand and holding for 10 seconds. If the edges are sticking well, leave it on for the full 7 days, if not, remove the patch and apply a new one.
- If it has been more than 24 hours or if you don't know, refer to the chart on the next page.
- You may need to have an extra package of patches to replace any that come off.

# Help - I forgot my patch (or it came off)

The patch is applied late or has been off for less than 24 hours  Apply a new patch as soon as possible; keep it in place until your regular patch change day.

I missed applying my patch (or it has been off) by more than 24 hours



		
<p>Apply a new patch as soon as possible.</p> <p>Keep the same patch change day and continue your 3 week cycle.</p> <p>Abstain from intercourse or use condoms for the next 7 days.</p> <p>If you have had unprotected intercourse within the last 5 days, consider using emergency contraception.</p>	<p>Apply a new patch as soon as possible.</p> <p>Keep the same patch change day.</p> <p>Finish the cycle of patches and start a new 3 week cycle without taking a week off.</p>	<p>Apply a new patch as soon as possible.</p> <p>Keep the same patch change day.</p> <p>Finish the cycle of patches and start a new 3 week cycle without taking a week off.</p> <p>Abstain from intercourse or use condoms for the next 7 days.</p> <p>If you have had unprotected intercourse within the last 5 days, consider emergency contraception.</p>

## Things to Remember

- The patch does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). You should use condoms every time you have sex.
- It is important to have a yearly physical while you are using birth control.
- Keep a supply of extra patches in case your patch comes loose or falls off and you have to replace it.
- When you are using the patch you are strongly advised not to smoke. Cigarette smoking increases the risk of serious adverse effects on the heart and blood vessels. This risk increases with age.
- The patch can suppress milk production and is generally not recommended for breast-feeding women.

## Who can you talk to if you have more questions?

If you have concerns or questions, call and ask for Sexual Health, or visit the health unit website below.



**simcoe muskoka**  
DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

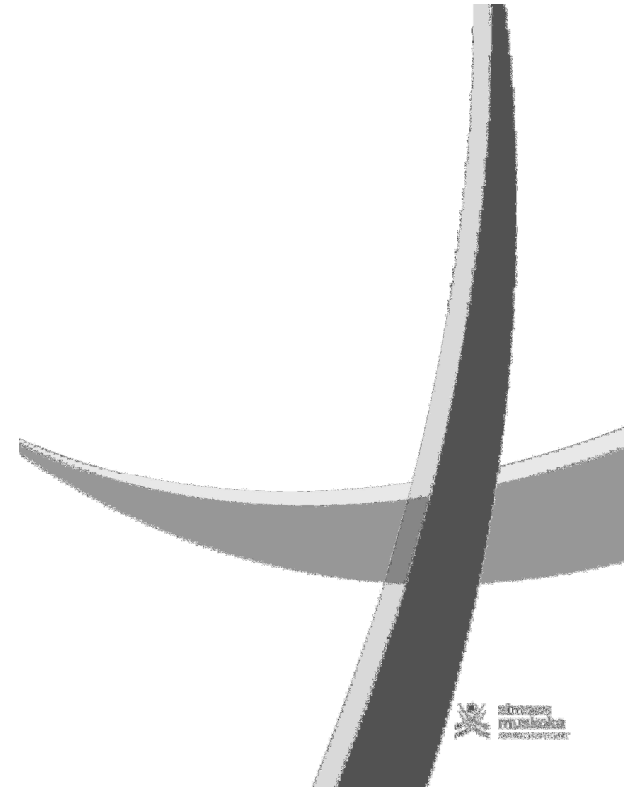
Tel: 705-721-7520  
Toll free: 1-877-721-7520  
[www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org)

## Resources

Stay on Schedule (SOS): [www.sexualityandu.ca](http://www.sexualityandu.ca)

Updated August 2015

# The Birth Control Patch



Permission to print algorithm has been provided courtesy of the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada. Dec 2011