

Contraceptive Patch (the patch)

What is the contraceptive patch?

The contraceptive patch is a method of birth control that uses hormones to prevent pregnancy. The patch contains two types of hormones, estrogen and progestin. You put the patch on your lower stomach, upper arm, buttocks, or upper back. Each patch works to prevent pregnancy for 7 days. After 7 days, you take the patch off and put a new patch. After 3 patches you stop using the patch for one week and you get your period. At the end of the week you start a new patch. This method of birth control is reversible, meaning that once you stop using the patch you can get pregnant.

How does the patch work?

The patch works by preventing ovulation (the release of an egg from a woman's ovary). It also makes the mucus in a woman's cervix (the opening to her uterus) thick so that sperm cannot pass into the uterus to reach the egg. The patch also thins the lining of a woman's uterus so that an egg cannot attached and develop into a pregnancy.

How well does the patch work to prevent pregnancy?

The patch works very well to prevent pregnancy. How well it works depends on if you use the patch the correct way all the time. If 100 women use the patch the right way for one year only one woman might get pregnant. If the same 100 women use the patch for one year but do not always use it the right way, about 9 women might get pregnant. The patch works as well as birth control pills and the vaginal ring. The patch may be less effective if you weigh more than 198 pounds.

What do women like about the patch?

- The patch is a very effective method of birth control.
- This method of birth control is reversible (not permanent).
- The patch is private (no one but you needs to know).
- You do not need to interrupt sex to use the patch.
- The patch may reduce your risk of cancer of the ovaries and uterus.
- You can usually get pregnant soon after you stop using the patch.
- Some women may have less pain and bleeding with their periods.
- Using the patch may reduce the symptoms some women have before their periods, like breast tenderness, mood changes, and stomach or back pain.
- The patch may improve acne.

What do women not like about the patch?

- The patch **DOES NOT** protect you from HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STD)
- There is more estrogen in the body when you use the patch than when you use birth control pills. Because of this, some women may have a higher risk of blood clots when using the patch than when using birth control pills.
- The patch may cause changes in your periods like spotting between periods, lighter or heavier periods, or no periods at all.
- The patch may interact with other medications you take which may change how well the patch or the other medicines work.
- You must remember to change the patch every week on the same day.

What are the possible side effects of using the patch?

- Changes in your period
- Nausea and vomiting
- Headaches or dizziness
- Breast pain or breast tenderness

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- Larger breast size
- Less desire for sex
- Changes in mood, nervousness, or depression
- Changes in appetite and weight
- Bloating or constipation
- Changes in skin (acne, oiliness, darkening)
- Rash or irritation under the patch
- More vaginal discharge
- Vaginal infections
- Changes in hair (hair loss or unwanted hair growth)
- Changes in vision
- Problems with contact lenses
- Serious allergic reaction

Sometimes the patch can cause very serious health problems like heart attack, stroke, blood clots, liver disease, or high blood pressure.

- ✓ DO NOT use the patch if you have any of the following:
 - Liver disease or liver tumor
 - History of blood clot, stroke, or heart attack
 - Diabetes for more than 20 years or diabetes with kidney or eye problems
 - Certain kinds of very bad headaches
 - Some types of heart disease
 - High blood pressure
 - Breast cancer
 - Some forms of Lupus
 - A certain type of organ transplant
 - An allergy to estrogen or progestin or the other ingredients in birth control pills
- ✓ DO NOT use the patch if it has been less than 21 days since you had a baby or
 - If you are pregnant or think you might be pregnant.
 - If you are 35 years old or older and smoke cigarettes.
- ✓ Talk with your health care provider about whether the patch is safe for you if you have:
 - Problems with your gallbladder
 - HIV, tuberculosis or a seizure disorder and use certain types of medications
 - If you are breastfeeding and less than one month post-partum

Call your health center right away if you have any of the following:

- Shortness of breath
- Pain in your chest
- Sudden changes in your vision
- Very heavy vaginal bleeding
- New pain in your leg
- Lower stomach pain
- New or worse headache
- New or worse depression
- A new lump in your breast
- Redness, rash, itching or pain on the skin underneath or around the patch
- Missed 2 periods in a row or missed 1 period after not using the patch correctly, or think you might be pregnant
- Sudden nausea, vomiting, dizziness, faintness, numbness, or weakness in the arms or legs

Contact your health care provider if you think you have a sexually transmitted disease (STD) or if you want to stop using the patch and start using another method, or if you are planning to have surgery.

- To decrease your risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), use a latex condom every time you have vaginal, anal, or oral sex.
- Emergency contraception (EC) prevents pregnancy when used no later than 3-5 days after unprotected sex. If you need EC or want more information, call your health care provider, family planning counselor, or pharmacist.