

**What is the Birth Control Patch (Evra Patch)?**

The birth control patch contains 2 hormones (estrogen and progestin) that are absorbed through the skin (transdermal). Each patch is worn for one week at a time. It prevents pregnancy by stopping the release of an egg (ovulation), thickening the cervical fluid, and changing the lining of the uterus.

**How effective are Birth Control Patch?**

The patch is a very effective method of birth control. The patch is about 93% effective at preventing pregnancy in typical use, which means that around 7 out of 100 people who use it as their only form of birth control will get pregnant in one year. With consistent and correct use it can be over 99% effective.

**How can I get Birth Control Patch?**

You can visit a clinic to get the patch or a prescription for it and talk with a healthcare provider about whether it is right for you.

Advantages of the Patch	Disadvantages of the Patch
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Periods may be more predictable/regular and lighter</li> <li>• Less period cramping</li> <li>• Decreased symptoms of Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) and perimenopause</li> <li>• Can be used to skip or shorten your periods</li> <li>• Less anemia/iron deficiency caused by heavy periods</li> <li>• Does not affect your ability to get pregnant in the future - once stopped your fertility quickly returns</li> <li>• Easy to stop using and if you have side effects they go away very quickly</li> <li>• Less acne</li> <li>• Sexual enjoyment may increase, as using the patch can reduce the fear of pregnancy</li> <li>• Some protection against non-cancerous breast tumours, ovarian cysts, and fibroids</li> <li>• Decreased risk of ovarian and uterine cancer</li> <li>• May protect against osteoporosis and endometriosis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to remember to change the patch each week</li> <li>• Some users may experience mild side effects such as: spotting, nausea, breast tenderness, headaches or dizziness, skin irritation (usually these improve in the first few months of use)</li> <li>• May be visible to others</li> <li>• Does not match all skin tones</li> <li>• Possibility of high blood pressure</li> <li>• No protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)</li> <li>• Rare but serious complications of using the birth control patch include: blood clots, heart attack, stroke, liver tumours</li> <li>• Risks increase with age when accompanied by certain other risk factors such as smoking, especially more than 15 cigarettes a day</li> <li>• Some people cannot use the Birth Control Patch such as people who cannot have estrogen. Be sure to let your health care provider know if you have any medical conditions</li> </ul>

**When do I start my Patch and when is it effective?**

It is recommended you start your patch right away. The patch is effective in preventing pregnancy after one week of use, so you need to use a backup method of birth control such as condoms, or not have sex for 7 days. You do not have to wait for your period to start, but if you happen to start on the first day of your period you don't need to use a backup method as the patch is considered effective immediately.

**How do I use the Patch?**

The patch is packaged based on a 28 day cycle. It is typically worn on the lower belly, upper arm or bum on clean, dry, lotion-free skin. Your pack will contain 3 patches, each of which is worn for 7 days, for a total of 21 days. You must use all 3 patches in a row with no breaks in between. After you have used 3 patches in a row for 3 weeks, you can:

- a) remove the patch and take a short patch-free break of no more than 7 days, OR
- b) remove the patch and immediately apply the 1st patch of a new pack with no break in between.

In order to be protected from pregnancy for the whole month, you must be sure to apply your next patch on time and never go longer than 7 days without wearing one. Periods that occur while using the patch are a result of taking a break from hormones. Taking no hormone break or a shorter than 7 day break to lighten or skip periods is safe.

### Tips for using the patch:

- When applying press down firmly on the patch with the palm of your hand for 10 seconds.
- Check the patch daily to ensure it is on correctly.
- Put it on a different area of skin each time to avoid irritation. If needed, you can remove the patch and put it in a new location (for example, if it is causing irritation, do not apply to skin that is irritated or cut).
- You can exercise, swim, sweat and shower with the patch on.
- After removing a patch fold it closed on the sticky side and throw it in the garbage.
- Do not place the patch on or near your breast/chest.
- Do not decorate or cut the patch in any way.
- Do not use tape or glue to keep the patch in place.
- Avoid directly touching the sticky surface of the patch with your fingers.
- Avoid placing patch under areas of friction (such as your waist band).
- Avoid using any creams, lotions, or oils near or at the patch site.

### What if my patch falls off or I forget to change or remove it?

Check in with a health care provider or call Sex Sense (1-800-739-7367) about your individual situation. If your patch comes off or isn't changed on time, this can result in spotting.

#### **Patch was off less than 24 hours**

→ Re-apply the patch as soon as possible. If the patch does not stick on its own throw it out and use a new one (the hormones are in the sticky part). Change it on your normal patch change day.

#### **Patch off for more than 24 hours or not sure how long or forgot to change on time**

→ Apply a new patch as soon as possible.  
→ Use a backup method such as condoms, or do not have sex for the next 7 days until you've had a patch on for 7 days in a row.  
→ Skip your patch-free break this month, which means you likely won't have a period (this is safe). This means applying a new patch of your next pack as soon as you remove the current one.  
→ Make sure you use the patch for 21 days in a row (3 patches) before you take your next break.  
→ Consider using emergency contraception if you had sex without a condom in the last 5-7 days. For information on emergency contraception, please see our website at: [www.optionsforsexualhealth.org](http://www.optionsforsexualhealth.org).

### **Seek medical attention immediately if you have any of the following ACHES symptoms, as they could indicate a serious complication:**

- A**bdominal pain, especially on the right side of your stomach, below your rib cage
- C**hest or arm pain, shortness of breath, coughing up blood
- H**eadaches, severe and not relieved by over the counter pain medications
- E**ye problems, blurred vision, flashing lights, double vision, blindness
- S**welling, redness, numbness, tingling or pain in the legs

Some medications and over-the counter herbal supplements may interact with or decrease the effectiveness of birth control. Be sure to mention that you are using birth control to your health care provider or pharmacist.

### **Questions? We're here for you!**

We know it can be confusing to choose and use a method. We are here to help. You can visit one of our Options for Sexual Health Clinics to speak with a health care provider. Our Sex Sense Team is available Monday-Friday 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. by phone 1-800-739-7367 or by email at [SexSense.org](http://SexSense.org) to answer your questions about birth control, or any other questions about sex, sexuality, or sexual health. This fact sheet contains general information and should not be used in place of individual consultation with a qualified healthcare provider.