

What You Should Know About ...

See Glossary section for definitions of underlined words.

The Contraceptive Patch (Ortho Evra)

What is the Contraceptive Patch?

- The Contraceptive Patch is a small, smooth, beige, square patch placed on the skin.
- It contains man-made hormones similar to the natural hormones that already exist in your body.
- The Patch slowly releases hormones into the body through the skin.

How does the Patch work?

- The Patch prevents your ovaries from releasing an ovum (egg) each month.
- The Patch makes the cervical mucous thicker. This makes it harder for sperm to get into the uterus.
- It changes the lining of the uterus. The lining of the uterus gets thinner so it is harder for a fertilized egg to stick to the uterus. Even if an egg is released and fertilized, it will not continue to grow.
- The Patch prevents pregnancy 92-99% of the time.

How do I use the Patch?

- Put the Patch on the buttocks, abdomen, upper body (front or back, not the breast), or upper outer arm.
- Wear a new Patch every week for 3 weeks in a row. Wear it in a different place each week.
- Always change the Patch on the same day of the week.
- Do not wear the Patch during the 4th week (the Patch-free week). You will get your period during this week.
- Following the Patch-free week, wear a new Patch to continue protection from pregnancy and start a new cycle. Start wearing the new patch on the same day of the week.
- You can wear the Patch while swimming, doing exercise, taking a shower or bath, or during hot and humid weather.

How soon does it start working?

- If you start the Patch on the first day of your period, it works immediately.
- If not, it starts working within 7-14 days. Use another method of birth control (condoms and foam or sponge) until it starts working.

Does the Patch protect me from STIs and HIV?

- No. Always use a latex or polyurethane male condom or a female condom when you have sex to reduce the risk of getting an STI (sexually transmitted infection) or HIV infection.

Are there any side effects?

You may feel some minor side effects. If they are very uncomfortable or last longer than a few months, talk to your health care provider. Minor side effects include:

- irregular bleeding
- nausea (feeling sick to the stomach)
- headaches
- breast discomfort
- skin irritation where the patch touches the skin
- menstrual cramps

- upper respiratory infection
- depression or sadness

What if the Patch falls off?

- If it has been off for less than 24 hours, put a new one on.
- Keep the same change day as usual.
- If it has been off for more than 24 hours, put on a new patch, and use a back-up method of birth control for one week (for example, condoms and spermicides).

Is the Patch safe for all women to use?

Ask your health care provider if it is right for you. Tell him/her about any medical problems. The patch may not be right for you if:

- you smoke, especially if you are 35 or older
- you are breastfeeding
- you weigh more than 198 pounds (it may not be as effective)
- you have a family history of breast cancer
- you have had heart disease, serious liver disease, diabetes, blood clots, or high blood pressure.

Where can I get the Patch?

You can get the Patch from:

- your health care provider
- a teen clinic
- a walk-in clinic
- a community health clinic.

Where can I get more information?

- From your health care provider, community health clinic, or public health nurse
- From the Facts of Life On-Line: e-mail your questions to thefactsoflife@serc.mb.ca.
- From websites: www.sexualityandu.ca or www.serc.mb.ca.

If this method fails, and if you don't want to get pregnant, see a health care provider or pharmacist for emergency contraception as soon as you can.

Glossary:

Cervical mucous – The fluid produced by the cervix (the lower part of the uterus that opens into the vagina). The mucous changes at different times of the menstrual cycle. Around the time of ovulation, the mucous is clear and slippery.

Emergency Contraception – Medication used to avoid pregnancy *after* sex, when you didn't use birth control or the birth control didn't work (for example, the condom broke).

Uterus – A pear-shaped, hollow organ with muscular walls. The fetus grows in the uterus during pregnancy. The uterus is also called the "womb".