

# Information About BIRTH CONTROL PATCH ('THE PATCH')

## ***What is the contraceptive patch?***

The patch is a weekly hormonal birth control method that is worn on the skin to prevent pregnancy.

## ***How does the patch work?***

The patch works like birth control pills. While you are wearing the patch, it releases two hormones through your skin where they are absorbed into your bloodstream. These hormones work to prevent pregnancy in the following ways:

They may:

- Keep the body from releasing an egg that could be fertilized by a man's sperm
- Cause changes in the cervical mucus making it more difficult for a man's sperm to enter the uterus (womb)
- Keep a fertilized egg from attaching to the uterus (womb)

## ***How well does the patch work?***

When used correctly, the patch works 97-99% of the time. The patch may be less effective in women who weigh 198 pounds or more.

## ***Why is the patch a good choice for me?***

The patch is easy to use. You only have to think about birth control once a week.

## ***Is there anyone who should not use the patch?***

Most women can use the patch without having any problems. Women age 35 and older who smoke 15 or more cigarettes a day probably shouldn't use the patch. You should not use the patch if:

- You are pregnant or think you may be pregnant
- You have very bad pain in your chest or legs
- You have very bad headaches (migraines with aura) or dizziness
- You have uncontrolled high blood pressure
- You have ever had a heart attack, stroke or blood clots
- The whites of your eyes look yellow or you have ever had liver tumors
- You have or had breast or other cancer
- You have bleeding from your vagina and do not know why



Hormones that are in the patch get into the bloodstream and are removed from the body differently than those found in birth control pills taken by mouth.

You will get about 60% more estrogen if you use the patch than if you use most birth control pills. This increase in the amount of estrogen that is in your bloodstream may increase the risk of side effects.

It is not known if there are differences in the risk of serious side effects from the patch.

Talk to your doctor or nurse about how this information may affect you.

## ***How do you use the patch?***

A new patch is applied to the skin each week for 3 weeks. The 4<sup>th</sup> week you do not wear a patch. This is when you have your period.

Choose one of the following ways to start using the patch:

- First day your period starts;
- First Sunday after your period starts; or,
- At a time determined by your doctor or nurse

***I should begin using the patch on:*** \_\_\_\_\_

### Example of a Cycle:

Week One - Apply one new patch.  
Week Two- Remove old patch and apply new patch.  
Week Three- Remove old patch and apply new patch.  
Week Four- Remove old patch and your period should start this week.

## **REMEMBER:**

*Every new patch should be applied on the same day of the week for 3 weeks.*

## Information About BIRTH CONTROL PATCH (“THE PATCH”), continued

### ***What are the possible side effects of the patch?***

The most common side effects of the patch are similar to birth control pills and include:

- Breast tenderness
- Nausea
- Headache
- Mood swings
- Irregular bleeding
- Minor skin irritation where the patch is located

### ***Helpful hints for using the patch:***

- Always apply your patch to clean, dry skin. Do not put creams, lotions, oils, powder, or makeup on or near your patch to make sure it sticks to your skin.
- Do not apply your patch to skin that is irritated, red, or has cuts.
- Apply the patch to your buttock, abdomen, upper chest or back, or the outside of your upper arm.
- Do not apply your patch on or very close to your breasts.
- Apply to a different spot each time you change it. Remember the patch must stay in place for seven days.
- After applying the patch, gently rub the patch for 30 seconds to be sure it sticks to your skin.
- Only 1 patch should be worn at the time. *Remove the old patch before you apply a new one.*
- Check your patch each day to be sure it is completely attached.
- Swimming, showering, bathing and exercising should not affect your patch.

### ***What are some of the benefits of using the patch?***

Some of the benefits of using the contraceptive patch are:

- Your periods may be shorter and lighter.
- Your chance of having a pregnancy in your tubes decreases.
- Your chance of getting cancer in your ovaries and uterus decreases.
- Your periods should come at the same time each month and be less painful.
- You do not have to remember to take a pill every day.

### ***How do I know if I have a problem using the patch?***

If you have any of the warning signs below, call your doctor, nurse, or clinic right away:

- Bad pain or loss of feeling in your arms or legs
- Headaches, dizziness, or fainting
- Eye problems (flashing lights, fuzzy vision or suddenly you cannot see)
- Very bad pain in your lower stomach
- A lump in your breast
- Yellowing of your eyes or skin

*Very few women have these problems.*

### ***Can I breastfeed while using the birth control patch?***

**Yes!** You may use the patch after being informed about the chance of your milk supply being reduced. If breastfeeding only and using a birth

control method with estrogen, only begin to use 6 weeks after your baby is born and your milk supply is well established.

It is recommended that breastfeeding women use progestin-only methods; such as, “the Shot”, like Depo-Provera, progestin-containing IUD, like Mirena, or the Minipill.

### ***Where can I get the birth control patch?***

You can get the patch or a prescription for the patch at your local health department, a family planning clinic or a doctor’s office.

### ***If you are thinking about stopping use of the patch for birth control!***

Before you stop using the patch, call your doctor or nurse to talk about it.

#### **REMEMBER:**

*The patch will not protect you against HIV or any other sexually transmitted infections. Use condoms to protect yourself each time you have sex.*

***If you have any questions, call us at:***

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