

The Contraceptive Patch



Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH AND
EMERGENCY SERVICES

What it is

The contraceptive Patch (Evra® or the Transdermal Patch) is a 4 × 4 cm patch that sticks to a woman's skin and continuously releases hormones. The Patch helps prevent pregnancy, but does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

How the Patch works

The Patch works in a similar way as the Pill. It prevents pregnancy by:

- stopping ovaries from releasing an egg every month
- thickening the cervical mucus so the sperm have a harder time traveling
- making the lining of the uterus thinner so that an egg has a harder time implanting

Advantages

- effective birth control that you only have to remember once a week
- the hormone is released slowly and steadily over the week
- hormone goes through the skin, not the stomach, so less chance of nausea
- shorter and more regular periods; may reduce cramps
- can be easily reversed; no delay to fertility

Disadvantages

- the Patch does not protect against sexually transmitted infections
- may cause skin irritation at the Patch site
- may cause temporary side effects (see sections on Side Effects)

Where to get the Patch

You need a prescription for the Patch, so you will need to visit your doctor. If you are aged 24 or younger you can go to Public Health's Sexual Health clinic. Cost of the Patch will vary and some health plans will cover the cost.

How to use the Patch

You will use the Patch in 28-day cycles (four weeks). For three weeks of the cycle you will wear a Patch. This Patch is changed every week. On the fourth week you will not wear a Patch.

Where to put it

There are four areas you can wear the patch: your buttocks, abdomen, upper body (not breasts), or upper outer arm.

Pick a place that is clean, dry, and non-hairy. **Do not put the Patch on your breasts.**



buttocks



abdomen



upper torso
(front and back
except on your breasts)



upper outer arm

- Apply to clean, dry skin where it will not be rubbed by clothing (Do not apply makeup, lotions or powder before putting on the Patch).
- Press down firmly with the palm of your hand for ten seconds to make sure all edges stick well.
- Check every day to make sure edges are sticking.
- To remove, lift off corner and peel back. Fold in half and throw away.
- Apply to a different area each time you change the Patch.

When to start it

- Apply the first Patch on the first day of your menstrual period. If you put the Patch on more than 24 hours after your period starts, you will not be protected from pregnancy for the first week and will need a back-up method of birth control.
- For three weeks you will wear a Patch – putting a new one on every week on the same weekday (for example, if you start the first Patch on a Monday, you will change it every Monday). This day is Patch change day.
- On the fourth week, you will NOT put on a Patch; you should get your period during this week.

When you will get your period

- You will get your period during the fourth week of your Patch cycle; the week you do not wear the Patch.
- After your week off, start a new package. Apply a new Patch on your Patch Change Day; the day after day 28 – no matter when your period begins or ends.

Side effects of the Patch

When you first start using the Patch, you might notice side effects including:

- bleeding between periods
- breast tenderness
- headaches
- nausea
- skin irritation

These symptoms usually go away in the first three months.

Times when you need to use back-up birth control

- during the first month of using the Patch
- if you miss your Patch change day by more than 48 hours
- if the Patch has been off for more than 24 hours
- if you forget to put the Patch back on after seven days (In this situation, there is a risk of pregnancy so be sure you are not pregnant before you start up again or use another Patch)

Remember!

The Patch does **NOT** protect against sexually transmitted infections. Your best protection is to use the Patch with a condom

Women who weigh 90kg (198 lbs) or more have a higher risk of pregnancy when using the Patch.

The Patch is **NOT** recommended for women who cannot take birth control pill for medical reasons. This includes women who have had a blood clot, heart attack, stroke or breast cancer, as well as women with active liver disease or women over 35 years old who smoke.



Scan this code with your smartphone for more information about sexual health clinics and services.

Alternate formats of this document are available upon request.

Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services

Sexual Health/Harm Reduction Program

If the Patch starts to come off...

If the Patch has been off or partially off for less than 24 hours:

- try to reapply by pressing with your hand for ten seconds
- If that doesn't work, put a new Patch on right away (the Patch only works if it is sticking correctly)
- The day you will change the Patch stays the same
- No backup is needed

If the Patch has been off more than 24 hours:

- put a new Patch on right away and start a new four week cycle
- you will have a new Patch change day
- use back-up birth control for the next seven days

If you forget to change the Patch...

If fewer than 48 hours (two days) have passed since you were supposed to change the Patch:

- apply a new Patch as soon as you remember
- you can either keep your same Patch change day or start a new one
- you are still protected against pregnancy

If more than two days have passed since you were supposed to change the Patch:

- apply a new Patch as soon as you remember
- start a new four week cycle with a new Patch change day
- use back-up birth control for the next seven days

If you forget to take the Patch off for your patch-free week:

- take it off as soon as you remember
- start your next cycle on the usual day

If you forget to put the Patch back on and have been without the Patch for more than seven day:

- there is a risk of pregnancy
- begin a new cycle as soon as possible as long as pregnancy is excluded (consider emergency contraception if necessary)
- use back-up birth control for the next seven days

Sexual Health/Harm Reduction Program

For clinic times call 519-883-2267

All clinical and counselling services are free and confidential. No health card is required to receive services.

Questions?

Call the Region of Waterloo Public Health Sexual Health Program or your doctor.

www.regionofwaterloo.ca/ph

519-575-4400 TTY 519-575-4608 Fax 519-883-2241