

CONTRACEPTIVE PATCH

WHAT IS THE CONTRACEPTIVE PATCH (EVRA®)?

The contraceptive patch, also known as "the patch", is a transdermal patch that sticks to the skin and releases hormones to prevent pregnancy. The patch is available for use with a prescription by a health care provider.

HOW IT WORKS

The patch (EVRA®) slowly releases the hormones (estrogen and progestin) through the skin daily. It works on a 28-day (four-week) cycle. Each patch is worn for one week at a time and is replaced on the same day of the week with a new patch for three consecutive weeks. On the fourth week no patch is worn.

The patch works the same way as the birth control pill:

- It stops your ovaries from releasing an egg each month
- It makes the cervical mucus thicker, making it more difficult for the sperm to travel into the cervix (the opening to the uterus)
- It makes the lining of the uterus thinner, making it harder for a fertilized egg to embed in the lining

EFFECTIVENESS

The contraceptive patch is 99 per cent effective with perfect use. For every 100 persons who use the patch, approximately one will get pregnant in one year.

The contraceptive patch may not work as effectively if you are taking certain medications such as antibiotics or some seizure medications.

Always check with the pharmacist or your health care provider if you are prescribed other medications. You should use an additional method of birth control such as condoms during use of some medication and for one week after you finish the medication.

THE PATCH SHOULD NOT BE USED BY

- People who cannot take estrogen
- People who are breastfeeding
- People over the age of 35 who use nicotine

The patch does not protect you from STI's. Always use a condom from beginning to end of all sexual contact to reduce your risk.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS

A very small number of people experience serious problems such as a blood clot in one of your blood vessels. You have an increased risk of these problems if you use nicotine, have high-blood pressure or are over 40 years of age.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF A BLOOD CLOT

- Abdominal pain (severe)
- Chest pain (severe), shortness of breath
- Headaches (severe), dizziness, weakness, numbness
- Eye problems (vision loss or blurring), speech problems
- Severe leg pain (calf or thigh)

If you experience any of the above, call 911 or go to nearest emergency department and tell them you are using the contraceptive patch.

ADVANTAGES

- Once-a-week birth control routine
- Decreased menstrual cramps
- Lighter, shorter, more regular periods

DISADVANTAGES

In the first three months, you may experience spotting or bleeding between periods, headaches, breast tenderness, and nausea. Other disadvantages include:

- Possible skin irritation at the application site
- Patch may detach from the skin (less than two per cent of the time)
- Less effective in those that weigh greater than 90 kilograms or 198 pounds

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

1. Apply the first patch during the first 24 hours of your period. This day of the week will become your patch change day. Apply a new patch on the same day of the week, weekly for the next two weeks.
For example, if your period starts on a Sunday, apply the first patch on that Sunday. You would change your patch every Sunday and apply a new one for two more Sundays.
2. On the fourth week, do not apply a patch. Your period should start during this patch-free week.
3. Following week four, repeat the cycle of three weekly applications followed by a patch-free week.
4. You should only wear one patch at a time.
5. Check periodically that the patch is stuck firmly to the skin.
6. Avoid using any creams, lotions, or oils near or at the patch site.
7. Avoid using hot tubs and saunas.
8. Check the expiry date on the package and do not use if expired.
9. If the patch detaches or you are late in applying your patch, read your instruction booklet, visit sexandu.ca and refer to their stay on schedule tool, or call the York Region sexual health information and appointment line at 1-800-361-5653, # 1

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- York Region Public Health Sexual Health Clinics **1-800-361-5653, # 1**
- Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada itsaplan.ca
- sexandu.ca