



Birth Control: The Patch

What is the patch?

The patch is a sticky square, like a bandaid. You put it on your skin each week. It works the same way as the pill by releasing hormones-- estrogen and progesterin. These hormones stop the body from releasing eggs and change the lining of your uterus preventing pregnancy. These hormones also change the mucus in your cervix to block sperm. It is prescribed by a healthcare provider.

How do I use the patch?

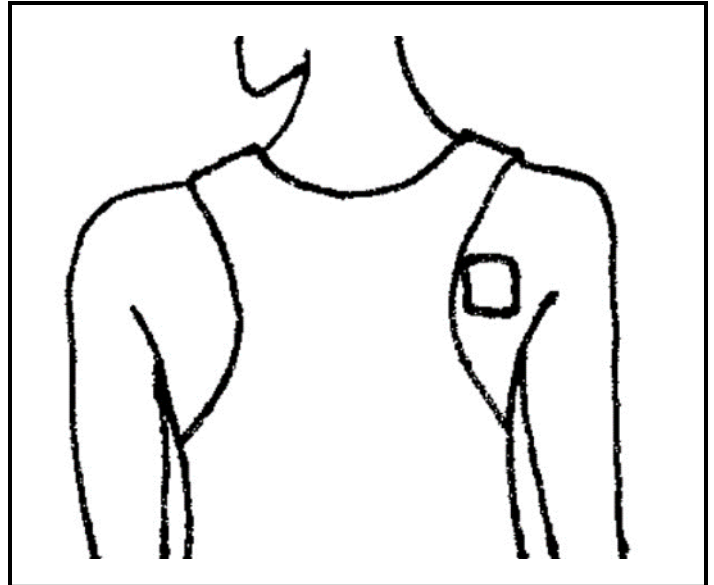
Stick the patch to your lower abdomen, buttocks, back or upper arm (but not your breast). Leave the patch on for 7 days. Remove the old patch and put a new patch on a different part of your body each week. Don't wear a patch the 4th week. During this week you will have your period. At the end of the 4th week, put on a new patch. The patch can be used to have periods less frequently. If you are interested in doing this, you should speak to your healthcare provider. The patch can be left on during swimming or showering or playing sports.

How well does the patch work?

About 9 out of 100 users will become pregnant each year if they don't always use the patch perfectly. Less than 1 out of 100 users will become pregnant each year if they always use the patch perfectly.

How do I make the patch work the best?

Keep it in place. Change it on time. If your patch falls off, you can put the same patch on if it has been off for less than 24 hours. If it has been more than 24 hours or you are unsure, put on a new patch and be sure to use a backup method of birth control such condoms.



What are pros to using the patch?

The patch is very good for pregnancy prevention. You only change the patch once a week, so you don't have to remember a daily pill. Periods are usually more regular, lighter and shorter. The patch can also help with acne, cramps and premenstrual syndrome (PMS).

What are cons to using the patch?

The patch doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) so you still need to use a condom. It doesn't work as well if you are overweight. It can leave a mark on your skin once it is removed. Side effects can include headaches, nausea and breast pain. There is a risk of forming a blood clot in your leg (a deep vein thrombosis) or in your lung (pulmonary embolus). The risk of blood clots is very low, but you should discuss this with your healthcare provider. Talk to your provider if you take other medications, smoke, have had blood clots, high blood pressure, migraine headaches or other medical problems. The patch may be less effective if you weigh more than 198 pounds (90kg).