



Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



Transdermal Patch

What is it?

The transdermal patch, also called “the patch”, is a method of birth control containing the hormones estrogen and progestin. These hormones are absorbed slowly through the skin. They stop the ovaries from releasing eggs, change the lining of the uterus to prevent implantation and thicken the vaginal mucous to prevent pregnancy. A patch is applied every week for three weeks, followed by one week with no patch; the week with no patch is the week in which a woman can expect to have her period. The patch should never be off for more than seven days. The patch is placed on clean and dry skin, on one of four sites: the buttocks, lower belly, upper outer arm, or upper body, but never right on the breast. It is recommended that the site the patch is placed on be rotated each time.

How effective is it?

Less than one 3 out of 1000 women will get pregnant every year if they always use the patch perfectly. With typical use, 90 out of every 1000 women may become pregnant.

What are the side effects?

Headache, irregular bleeding, nausea and breast soreness are experienced by some individuals. Most side effects will go away in the first few months. Local reactions where the patch is placed on the skin may occur.

What are the risks?

The patch may increase the risk for stroke, heart attack or blood clots. Women over the age of 35 who smoke or have high blood pressure have a higher risk.

What are the benefits?

The benefits of the patch may include effective prevention of pregnancy, regulated periods with less bleeding and cramping, less pre-menstrual symptoms, and decreased risk of ovarian and endometrial cancer. Use of the patch does not require daily care.

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905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



What are the limitations?

A prescription is needed to obtain the transdermal patch. It is less effective for individuals who weigh 90 kg (198 lbs.) or more. The patch is not recommended for women with a history of blood clots, stroke or heart disease, those with high blood pressure, severe migraines, breast cancer, endometrial cancer, liver disease or tumours.

What are the effects on breastfeeding?

Estrogen may reduce breast milk supply. It is recommended that breastfeeding mothers use progestin only types of birth control. If you are currently breastfeeding and would like to discuss birth control options, please talk to your health care provider.

What you should know...

- The patch sticks well and you can continue to swim and shower.
- It is best not to expose the patch to sources of direct heat such as heating pads, hot water bottles, saunas, hot tubs, or intensive sunbathing, in case of risk of increased absorption.
- The patch-free interval should never be more than seven days.
- If a patch is applied late or a patch falls off, refer to the product instructions.
- The patch **does not** prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV/AIDS.
- Practice safe sex and always use a condom with lubricant when having oral, vaginal, or anal sex.

Contact your health care provider immediately if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- sudden and severe chest pain/heaviness
- sudden and severe abdominal pain
- leg pain
- trouble breathing/shortness of breath
- severe headaches or visual problems

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