

# Birth Control Patch

## *What is the patch?*

- Evra, a contraceptive patch worn daily on the skin, helps prevent pregnancy when used correctly.
- It looks like a thin beige bandage.
- A single patch is worn for a week at a time, even during activities such as exercise, showering and swimming.

## *How does the patch work?*

- The sticky part of the patch contains two hormones (estrogen and progesterin) which are similar to a woman's natural hormones.
- These hormones are absorbed through the skin into the blood stream and stop your body from releasing an egg each month. You cannot get pregnant if your body does not release an egg.

## *How effective is the patch?*

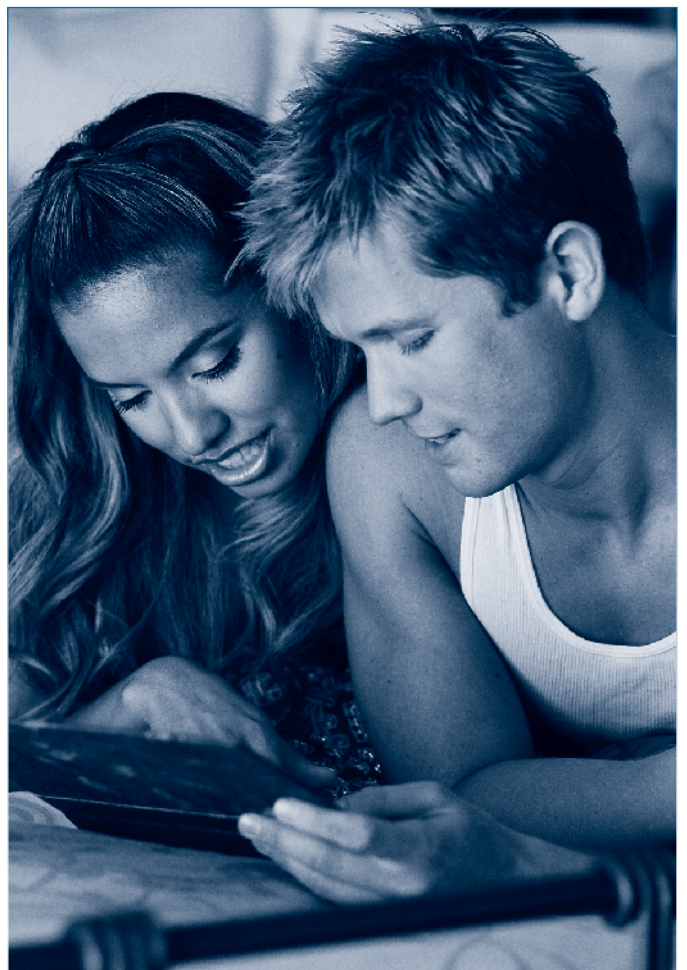
- With perfect use, the patch can be 99.3 per cent effective.
- There may be an increased risk of pregnancy in women weighing more than 90 kg (198 lbs.).

## *How do I start the patch?*

- Book an appointment through your community birth control clinic or health-care provider to start on the patch.
- Start the patch on the first day of your period when possible. The patch works immediately. If you start it on any other day, use an extra form of birth control (e.g. condom) for 7 days.

## *Where and how do I apply the patch?*

- The patch should be put on clean, dry skin. Do not apply bath oils, body wash, lotions, powder or oil on the patch area.
- Apply the patch to any one of the following areas: the upper buttock, the upper outer arm, the abdomen, or the upper body (front and back) but not the breasts.
- The patch can be put on the same area each week, but avoid putting it on the exact same spot as the previous patch.
- Use only one patch at a time.
- Press down firmly on the patch with the palm of your hand for 10 seconds, making sure the edges stick well.
- Check daily to ensure the patch is securely in place.
- Do not put the patch on reddened, cut or damaged skin.



## *When do I change the patch?*

The day you apply your first patch is your **Patch Change Day**. The patch should be applied on the same day of the week, at about the same time of day. This helps establish a routine e.g. Monday morning or before bed.

### **Week 1**

- On your **Patch Change Day**, apply a patch. Wear it for 7 days.

### **Week 2 and 3**

- On your **Patch Change Day**, remove the old patch and apply a new one.

### **Week 4**

- On your **Patch Change Day**, remove the old patch. Week 4 is a patch-free week. Do **NOT** apply a new patch for 7 days.
- You can expect your period to start during this week.
- You are protected from pregnancy during the 7-day patch-free week.
- Start your next 4-week cycle by applying a new patch on your **Patch Change Day**.



## *What if I forget to apply/change the patch?*

The greatest risk for pregnancy is when you are late applying the patch after the 7-day patch-free break or are late changing the patch by more than 48 hours.

### **Week 1**

#### **Missed Patch Change Day by more than 24 hours (1 day)**

- Apply the new patch as soon as you remember.
- Use an extra form of birth control (e.g. condoms) for the next 7 days as you may not be protected from pregnancy.
- If you have had unprotected sex during this time, or the extra form of birth control fails (e.g. condom breaks), contact your birth control clinic or health-care provider as you may want to consider emergency contraception, which can prevent pregnancy.
- You will now have a **new** Patch Change Day.

### **Week 2 and 3**

#### **Late changing patch by less than 48 hours (2 days)**

- Apply the new patch as soon as you remember.
- There is no increased risk of pregnancy.
- Keep the same Patch Change Day.

#### **Late changing patch by more than 48 hours (2 days)**

Apply the new patch as soon as you remember.

- Use an extra form of birth control (e.g. condoms) for the next 7 days as you may not be protected from pregnancy.
- If you have had unprotected sex during this time, or the extra form of birth control fails (e.g. condom breaks), contact your birth control clinic or health-care provider as you may want to consider emergency contraception, which can prevent pregnancy.
- You will start a new 4-week cycle.
- You will have a **new** Patch Change Day.

### **Week 4**

#### **Forgot to take the patch off**

- Remove it as soon as you remember.
- There is no increased risk of pregnancy.
- Keep your same Patch Change Day.

*What do I do if the patch comes off, is loose, I want to move it, or it is causing irritation?*

#### **Patch is partially or completely off - Less than 24 hours**

- Try to reapply the patch using the steps above or remove the old patch and put on a new patch right away.
- No extra form of birth control is needed.
- Keep your same Patch Change Day.

#### **More than 24 hours**

- Remove the old patch and apply a new patch right away.
- Use an extra form of birth control (e.g. condoms) for 7 days.
- If you have had unprotected sex during this time, or the extra form of birth control fails (e.g. condom breaks), contact your birth control clinic or health-care provider as you may want to consider emergency contraception, which can prevent pregnancy.
- Start a new 4-week cycle. The day you begin your new cycle becomes your **new** Patch Change Day.

#### **Patch seems loose**

- Press down firmly on the patch with the palm of your hand for 10 seconds. Make sure the edges stick well. Check by running your fingers around the edge of the patch.
- If the patch does not stick well, remove the old patch and put on a new patch right away.
- Band-aids or tape should not be used to hold the patch in place as the absorption of the hormone will be affected.

#### **Moving the Patch**

- Once applied, the patch cannot be moved; if you need to remove it you must apply a new patch.

#### **Skin irritation or redness under patch**

- Remove the patch and apply a new patch in another area of the body. You now have a **new** Patch Change Day.

*What are the side effects?*

You may experience (especially in the first 3 months) one or more of the following:

- Breast tenderness, mild headaches, moodiness, bloating or slight weight gain or loss
- Spotting or bleeding between periods
- Skin irritation

**DO NOT STOP WEARING THE PATCH.** If you have any of the above side effects - **talk with your health-care provider or birth control clinic.**

#### *Blood clots*

- In very rare cases, women wearing the patch may develop a blood clot.
- Your risk is higher if you are a smoker.
- If there is a family history, or you have had a blood clot, heart attack or stroke, you are at higher risk.

See your doctor immediately or go to the nearest emergency room if you have any of these symptoms:

- severe abdominal pain
- severe chest pain or difficulty breathing
- severe headaches or numbness in arms and legs
- eye problems such as blurred vision or loss of vision
- severe leg pain



## *Important to remember*

- The patch should be stored at room temperature - do not refrigerate or freeze.
- The patch may protect you from certain types of cancer (ovarian and endometrial).
- The patch will not protect you from sexually transmitted infection (STI).
- The patch can be worn safely for many years. Some women do not need to "take a break" from the patch.
- Prescriptions (e.g. some antibiotics or anticonvulsant) or over-the-counter medications (e.g. St. John's Wort) may decrease the effectiveness of the patch.
- Check with your pharmacist regularly, or when your medication changes, to find out if it affects the patch in any way.
- Periods may be more regular, lighter and shorter with less cramping.
- You can get pregnant if you do not follow the instructions for using the patch.
- Used patches still contain active hormones. Fold patch inward so it sticks to itself and then throw it away.
- Talk with your physician if you are breastfeeding.
- **DO NOT USE** the patch if you are taking birth control pills.
- **DO NOT USE** the patch if you know or think you are pregnant.

## *Sexual decision making*

Choose to have sex or not - you have the right to make that decision.

Choose to protect yourself from pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection (STI).

**Use a condom every time you have sex to lower your risk of STI.**

Talk with your partner about these choices before you have sex.



## *For more information*

Contact your physician, local community health centre or birth control clinic:

Calgary:	(403) 944-7111
Edmonton:	(780) 735-0010
Fort McMurray:	(780) 791-6263
Grande Prairie:	(780) 513-7551
Lethbridge:	(403) 320-0110
Red Deer:	(403) 346-8336

Or

**Health Link Alberta (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)**

Edmonton, call 408-LINK (5465)

Calgary, call 943-LINK (5465)

Outside the Edmonton

and Calgary local calling areas,

call toll-free 1-866-408-LINK (5465)

STI/HIV Information Line 1-800-772-2437