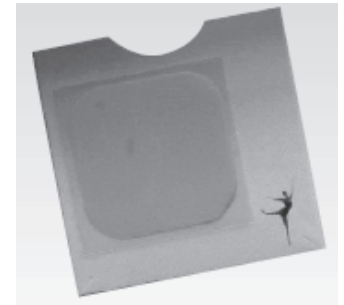


Birth Control Patch

What is the birth control patch?

- The birth control patch is a thin, light brown patch that's worn on the skin.
- The sticky part contains hormones (estrogen and progestin) that are like a woman's natural hormones. The hormones are absorbed through the skin and they stop the ovaries from releasing an egg. You can't get pregnant if you don't release an egg.



How well does the birth control patch work?

- There's about an **85%** chance of getting pregnant after 1 year of having unprotected sex.
- With typical use (not following the exact directions) the patch is **91%** effective.
- With perfect use (you follow the exact directions) the patch is **99.7%** effective.
- There might be a higher risk of getting pregnant if you weigh more than 90 kg (198 lbs.).
- Most pregnancies happen because people don't use their patches as directed.
- The patch doesn't protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or HIV.
- Use a condom every time you have sex (vaginal, oral, anal) to lower your risk of STIs and HIV.

What are the side effects of the patch?

There is a chance (more likely in the first 3 months) that you might have:

- headaches
- upset stomach (nausea)
- spotting or bleeding between periods
- tender breasts
- moodiness
- slight weight gain or loss
- bloating
- irritated skin

If you have side effects, don't stop using the patch. Talk to your health care provider. Most side effects get better within 3 months.

What are the benefits of the patch?

- Your period may be more regular, lighter, and/or shorter with less cramping.
- The patch may lower your risk of ovarian and endometrial cancer.
- The patch may help with acne and painful periods (dysmenorrhea).
- It's safe to use the patch for many years. There's no need to "take a break" from using it.
- You can get pregnant as soon as you stop using the patch.

How do I start using the patch?

You need a prescription from your health care provider for the patch. If you start the patch on:

- day 1 of your period, it works right away to prevent pregnancy
- any other day, you need to use an extra form of birth control (e.g., condoms, abstinence) for 7 days

How do I use the patch?

Put the patch on clean, dry skin on your upper buttocks, upper outer arm, abdomen, or upper body (see Figure 1). Put each new patch in a different place (e.g., change between right and left sides) to keep your skin from getting irritated.

Press down firmly on the patch with the palm of your hand for 10 seconds to make sure the edges stick well. Check that your patch is secure every day.

If your skin gets irritated, take the patch off and put a new one on in another place (your patch change day stays the same).

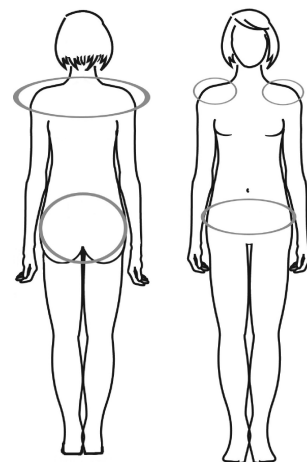


Figure 1

When using the patch, **don't**:

- put it on your breasts
- use bandages or tape to hold the patch in place
- put the patch on skin that's red, cut, or scratched
- use bath oil, body wash, lotion, or powder on the area where you'll put your new patch

Only use one patch at a time and:

- leave the patch on during activities (e.g., exercise, shower, swim)
- if it's not sticking or your skin is irritated, try to put it on again in a different place. If it won't stick, take it off and put a new patch on right away. If you need a replacement patch, talk to your pharmacist or health care provider.
- throw used patches in a garbage away from children or pets because they still contain hormones
- store patches at room temperature

When do I change the patch?

Your patch change day is the day of the week that you put your patch on. Always use a new patch on the same day of the week, at the same time.

You wear a patch for 1 week at a time. A new patch is put on each week for a 3-week cycle. You don't put a patch on during week 4 (hormone-free days). This is when you'll get your period. Never have the patch off for more than 7 days in a row.

After your 7 hormone-free days, start a new package of patches and put:

- on the first patch on the same patch change day
- the patch on even if you still have your period—it should stop in a few days
- the patch on even if you haven't had your period and call your health care provider

What if the patch fell off, I forgot to put it on, or I forgot to change the patch?

- If you need help deciding what to do, talk to your health care provider, read the chart below, or go to sexualityandu.ca and click on games and apps and look for stay on schedule.
- If it's less than 24 hours since the patch came off, try to put the same patch back on. If you can't, put on a new one right away.
- Your patch change day stays the same and you're still protected from pregnancy.

Week 1	Week 2 or 3	
Started more than 24 hours late or patch off more than 24 hours	Patch off 24 to 72 hours	Patch off for 72 hours or longer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put on a new patch right away. This cycle will have 3 patches. • Your patch change day stays the same. • Use a backup form of birth control (e.g., condoms, abstinence) for 7 days. • Get emergency contraception as soon as possible if your backup form of birth control fails (e.g., condom breaks) or you've had unprotected sex in the last 5 days. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put on a new patch right away. Finish this cycle of patches and then start a new cycle of 3 patches. Don't take the hormone-free break. • Your patch change day stays the same. • You might have spotting or miss your period this month. Don't take off your patch. • You're still protected from pregnancy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put on a new patch right away. Finish this cycle of patches and then start a new cycle of 3 patches. Don't take the hormone-free break. • Your patch change day stays the same. • You might have spotting or miss your period this month. Don't take off your patch. • Use a backup form of birth control (e.g., condoms, abstinence) for 7 days. • Get emergency contraception as soon as possible if your backup form of birth control fails (e.g., condom breaks) or you've had unprotected sex in the last 5 days.

Can the patch cause blood clots?

When using the patch, there's a small risk of blood clots in the legs, lungs, heart, and/or the head. The risk is higher depending on your:

- age
- weight—if you're obese
- history (or family history) of blood clots, heart attack, or stroke
- history of smoking (especially people older than 35 who smoke)
- history of migraines with aura or other nervous system problems affecting speech, vision, movement, or sensations
- risk factors for heart disease (e.g., high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol)
- history of other medical problems (ask your health care provider about this)

The risk of getting a blood clot with the patch may be higher than with the birth control pill. The risk of getting a blood clot is higher during pregnancy and right after having a baby than when using the patch.

If you get a fever or are exposed to heat (e.g., sauna, hot tub) with the patch on, you may get more estrogen. This may increase your risk of getting a blood clot.

What symptoms do I need to watch for?

Go to the nearest emergency room or call 911 if you have:

- trouble breathing
- a very bad headache
- sudden numbness in the face, arms, or legs (often only on one side of the body)
- very bad pain in your abdomen, chest, or legs
- eye problems (e.g., sudden blurry vision or loss of vision)
- sudden problems with walking or balance
- sudden confusion or trouble understanding what people say to you

Did You Know

- You have the right to make the decision to have sex or not.
- Plan ahead and talk to your partner about how to protect yourself and lower your risk of pregnancy, STIs, and HIV. Use a condom every time you have sex.
- Many sexual health clinics offer some types of birth control for no cost for people who qualify.
- Talk to your health care provider to see if the patch is right for you (e.g., just had a baby, breastfeeding, medical problem).
- Tell your health care provider (e.g., doctor, pharmacist) if you're using the patch to make sure you're protected from pregnancy if you take other medicine.
- There are apps to help you remember to change your patch.

Websites

- ahs.ca/srh
- ReadyOrNotAlberta.ca
- teachingsexualhealth.ca
- myhealth.alberta.ca
- sexualityandu.ca

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at 811.