



Transdermal Contraceptive Patch (Evra®)

What is the transdermal contraceptive patch?

- The transdermal contraceptive patch, also known as the birth control patch, is a method of contraception.
- The patch contains synthetic forms of the 2 female hormones, estrogen and progesterone.

What are the benefits of the transdermal contraceptive patch?

While the patch is primarily used to prevent pregnancy, it has other benefits as well including:

- Make your periods more regular and easier to predict
- Reduce period cramps
- Make your period lighter with less blood loss and a lower risk of anemia
- Improve acne
- Reduce risk of ovarian and endometrial cancer

How do I use the transdermal contraceptive patch?

- The patch is applied to the skin once a week for 3 weeks in a row. Each patch stays on the skin for 7 days and is replaced with a new patch once weekly.
- The patch should be changed on the same day each week - this is called the “patch change day”.
- After 3 weeks of patch applications, you will not wear a patch for 1 week. During this hormone-free break, you may have a period.

How do I apply the transdermal contraceptive patch?

- To apply the patch, open the foil pouch and peel off half of the clear liner to avoid touching the sticky surface. Place half of the patch on the skin, then remove the other half of the liner and press down on the patch for 10 seconds.
- The patch should be applied to a clean, dry, hairless area of skin on the buttocks, abdomen, upper outer arm or torso. Do not apply to the breasts.
- Apply each new patch to a different spot on the skin to prevent irritation.

When should I start using the transdermal contraceptive patch?

- You can start using the patch the day you pick it up from the pharmacy, regardless of where you are in your menstrual cycle. Another method of contraception (called back-up contraception) is required for 7 days when you first get started. Back-up contraception can include using barriers such as condoms.

What side effects should I expect while using the transdermal contraceptive patch?

- Here are some of the more common side effects of the transdermal contraceptive patch. Usually these side effects will disappear within the first few months of use. If they do not go away or become bothersome, talk to your healthcare provider.
 - Skin irritation
 - Nausea
 - Water retention/weight gain
 - Breakthrough bleeding (spotting)
 - Headache
 - Mood changes
 - Breast tenderness
 - Acne
- Some of the less common side effects include an increased risk of blood clots, but this is very rare. This risk is the highest when you first start using the transdermal contraceptive patch, or when you restart after not using it for more than a month. Talk to your healthcare provider immediately if you experience any of the following:
 - Pain in legs or chest
 - Swelling in legs or arms
 - Numbness in legs or arms
 - Sudden loss/change in vision
 - Severe headache
 - Unexplained shortness of breath

What should I do if the patch comes off my skin or I forget to apply the patch?

- If you notice that the edges of the patch have lifted, or the patch has completely come off your skin, you may not be protected from pregnancy.
- If the patch has been off your skin for **less than 24 hours**:
 - Reapply the patch to the same place on the skin right away. If it does not stick, you can apply a brand new patch.
 - You can apply the next patch on your regular “patch change day”.
- If the patch has been off of your skin for **more than 24 hours**, or if you **don’t know when it came off**:
 - You will need to put on a brand new patch right away. This will become your new “patch change day” and you will then apply new patches once weekly for another 3 weeks.
 - Depending on the number of days the patch has been off your skin, you may need to use backup contraception (e.g. condoms) for 7 days. If you had unprotected intercourse in the last 5 days, you may also need to use emergency contraception (e.g. Plan B). Contact your healthcare provider for further instructions.
- If you forget to apply your patch on the “patch change day”, contact your healthcare provider for instructions. You may also visit www.sexandu.ca/sos/ for more information.

How should I store and discard the transdermal contraceptive patch?

- Store patch at room temperature in original packaging until use.
- To discard, fold the patch in half so the adhesive side sticks to itself. Used patches may still contain hormones, so discard it in household trash out of reach of children and pets.

How can I protect myself from sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?

- The transdermal contraceptive patch does not protect you from STIs.
- The only way to prevent the transmission of STIs is by using condoms each time you have intercourse.

Notes:

This material is for informational purposes only. It does not replace the advice or counsel of a doctor or health care provider. Please consult with your doctor, pharmacist or other health care provider for further information.