

HOW TO USE THE BIRTH CONTROL PATCH

HOW THEY WORK: The major effect of the patch is to prevent ovulation, or release of an egg.

A. DIRECTIONS FOR USING THE PATCH

You may start taking your first pack of pills in any of the following ways:

1. On the first day you begin bleeding during your period.
2. On the first Sunday after your period begins. Back-up method is not needed. Use back-up contraception for the 1st week
3. Today, if there is absolutely no chance that you could be pregnant.

Use foam and condoms or another back-up method to protect you from pregnancy when on antibiotics. (see below)

The patch should be applied to clean, dry, healthy skin. Avoid lotions, powders, etc. where the patch is placed. Apply to the buttocks, abdomen, upper outer arm or upper torso. It should not be on the breasts. Each time a patch is changed, use a different location so as to prevent skin irritation. Apply a new patch every week on the same start day (ie. every Wednesday for 3 weeks. Week 4 is patch-free. Withdrawal bleeding is expected during this time. Start a new box of patches the next week on the same day of the week as the prior month.

B. PROTECTION

Unless otherwise informed by your care provider, you may assume that you are protected from pregnancy after you have completed your first week of patches. Your protection from then on is continuous, including the time you are having your period. **If you become ill and have several days of severe diarrhea, or if you are taking antibiotics, use foam and condoms or another back-up method for the remainder of that cycle.**

C. MENSTRUAL PERIODS

You may expect your period to begin sometime during your patch-free week. The hormones in the patch produce menstrual periods less in amount and duration. This should not be a cause for concern.

D. MINOR PROBLEMS YOU MAY EXPERIENCE AS SIDE EFFECTS OF THE PATCH (CHANGES IN HOEMONE LEVELS)

1. ***Spotting (breakthrough bleeding)***: It is caused by the slight change of hormone levels caused by the patch and it usually stops after 1-2 cycles. Continue using your patch - they will still be effective. Call us if the problem does not resolve by the third month of use. If the amount of bleeding is less than that of a normal period, continue your patch as usual until the time of your first check-up.
2. ***Delayed or Missed Period***: A delayed or missed period does not necessarily mean that you are pregnant. Call your care provider if you miss a period and have missed changing your patch. If you have not missed any patches and no period occurs during the last 7 days of a packet, begin a new packet as usual. If no period occurs by the end of the second packet, do not begin a third packet. Use foam and condoms to protect you from pregnancy, do a home pregnancy test or call for an appointment in the office.

3. ***If you forget to change your patch at the start of any patch cycle***, you may not be protected from pregnancy. Apply a new patch as soon as you remember. There is now a new patch change day. Use a back-up method for 1 week. If you forget to change on week 2 or week 3 for 1 or 2 days (up to 48 hrs.) apply a new patch immediately. The next patch should be applied on the usual patch change day. No back-up method is needed. If it is more than 2 days, start a new 4-week cycle immediately by putting on a new patch. There is now a new patch change day and a new "day 1".
4. ***Nausea and Vomiting, Weight Gain, Breast Tenderness***: Although annoying, they are not dangerous and they can be expected to stop after the first few cycles.
5. ***Vaginal Itching and Discharge***: Some women using the patch seem more likely to get certain vaginal infections. Although these symptoms are annoying they are not dangerous since such infections are readily diagnosed and treated without difficulty. Call for an appointment.

E. THE FOLLOWING RARE SYMPTOMS REQUIRE THAT YOU STOP THE PATCH AND GET PROMPT MEDICAL ATTENTION

SEVERE HEADACHE, SEVERE LEG CREAMPS, SEVERE ABDOMINAL PAIN, CHEST PAIN, BLURRED VISION:

These are danger signals, which can indicate problems. If you experience any of these symptoms, ***REMOVE THE PATCH IMMEDIATELY***. Call the office for an appointment. In the meantime, use foam and condoms or another backup method for protection. Do not be alarmed by irregular bleeding after you have stopped the patch. This is an expected result of stopping the patch without completing a cycle.

If you smoke more than 14 cigarettes a day, watch more carefully for patch danger signals. Smokers should probably stop using the patch at age 35. Even better, **STOP SMOKING**. You can talk to us about methods to help you quit.

Be sure to mention that you are using the patch anytime you are hospitalized or seen by a doctor or another care provider.

- F. If you miss two periods in a row, do a pregnancy test, even if you used your patches correctly.

If you have any additional problems not covered here, do not hesitate to call the Midwifery office at 275-7892 for further assistance.