

FACT SHEET : THE PATCH

Remember, the patch **does not** protect you from Sexually Transmitted Infections or HIV. Always use condoms to protect yourself!



HOW DOES THE PATCH WORK?

- The patch contains hormones like the ones your body makes. These hormones stop your ovaries from releasing eggs. Without an egg, you can't get pregnant.
- No method of birth control is 100% effective. If you change your the patch each week and keep it on, it is 99% effective. If you skip a patch or start it late, it is 91% effective.

HOW DO I START THE PATCH?

- There are 2 ways to start the patch:
 - **Quick Start:** Put on your first patch as soon as you get the pack.
 - **Next period:** Put on your first patch soon after your next period begins.
- If you put on your first patch *up to 5 days after the start of your period*, you are protected against pregnancy **right away**.
- If you put on your first patch *more than 5 days after the start of your period*, you should **use condoms as back-up for the first 7 days**.

HOW DO I USE THE PATCH?

- The patch is like a sticker you wear on your skin for a week. You can wear the patch anywhere on your skin except your breasts, your genitals, palms of your hands or soles of your feet.
- Choose a spot on your body where you can see the patch if it falls off. Place the patch on a clean, dry area and make sure the edges stick well.
- You will use a new patch every week for 3 weeks and no patch for the 4th week.
- Expect your period during the patch-free week. (You may have a light period or no period at all.)
- Start a new box of patches at the end of the 4th week.

WHAT IF THE PATCH COMES OFF?

- If the patch comes off, put it back on right away. If it does not stick, use a new patch.
- If the patch falls off for more than a day, put on a new patch and **use condoms for the next 7 days**.
- Put on your next patch a week from the date of this new patch.

WHAT IF I FORGET TO CHANGE THE PATCH AFTER 7 DAYS?

- The patch has enough hormones for 9 days. If you leave the patch on for 9 days or less, just put on a new patch.
- If you leave the patch on for more than 9 days, put on a new patch and **use condoms for the next 7 days**.

WHAT IF I STOPPED USING THE PATCH AND HAD UNPROTECTED SEX?

- Take Emergency Contraception (EC) **right away**. EC can prevent pregnancy up to 5 days after sex, and it works better the sooner you take it.

HOW DOES THE PATCH HELP ME?

- The patch is safe and effective birth control. Your periods may be more regular, lighter, and shorter. You may have clearer skin.
- The patch lowers your risk of getting cancer of the uterus and ovaries.
- The patch has **no effect** on your ability to get pregnant in the future, after you stop using it.

HOW WILL I FEEL ON THE PATCH?

- You will feel about the same. During the first 2-3 months you may have nausea, bleeding between periods, weight change, and/or breast pain. These problems often go away after 2-3 months.

DOES THE PATCH HAVE RISKS?

- The patch is very safe. Serious problems are rare. If you have any of the symptoms below, call your health provider:
 - Leg pain, swelling, and redness
 - Weakness or numbness on 1 side of your body
 - Bad headache
 - Vision problems
 - Chest pain
- Your health provider can help you find out if these symptoms are signs of a serious problem.

