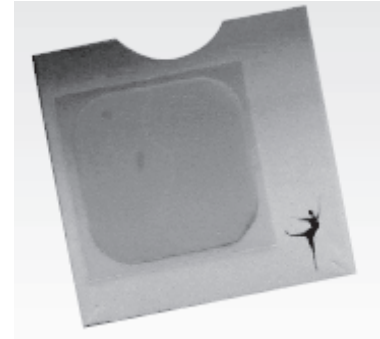


# Birth Control Patch (Evra®)

## What is the birth control patch?

- Evra® is a birth control patch you wear on your skin.
- It looks like a thin, light brown bandage.
- A patch is worn for one week at a time. A new patch is put on each week for a three week cycle. The day a new patch is put on is your “patch change day”. You do not put a patch on during week 4 (hormone-free break). This is when you get your period.
- It can be worn during activities (e.g., exercise, showering, and swimming).



## How does the patch work?

- The sticky part of the patch has two hormones similar to a woman’s natural hormones.
- These hormones are absorbed continuously through your skin into your blood. The hormones stop your body from releasing an egg. You cannot get pregnant if your body does not release an egg.

## How well does the patch work?

- With perfect use, the patch can prevent pregnancy 99 percent of the time.
- There might be a higher risk of getting pregnant for women that weigh more than 90 kg (198 lbs.).

## How do I start using the patch for the first time?

- See your healthcare provider. You need a prescription for the patch.
- If you start the patch on the first day of your period, you are protected from pregnancy right away.
- If you start it on any other day, use another form of birth control (e.g., condom) for 7 days.

## What are the side effects of the patch?

- There is a chance (especially in the first 3 months) that you might have:
  - tender breasts
  - mild headaches
  - moodiness
  - a bloated stomach
  - slight weight gain or loss
  - spotting or bleeding between periods
  - irritated skin

If you have any of these side effects, **do not take off the patch**. Talk to your healthcare provider. Most of the side effects get better after 3 months.

### Where and how do I put on the patch?

- Put the patch on clean, dry skin. Do not use any bath oil, body wash, lotion, or powder where you will put your new patch on.
- It can be put on: the upper buttocks, the upper outer arm, the abdomen, or the upper body (front or back) (see diagram 1).
- Do not put the patch on your breasts or where it might be rubbed off by clothing.
- To keep your skin from getting irritated, put each new patch in a different place (e.g., change between right and left sides).
- If your skin gets irritated, take the patch off and put a new one on another place (your patch change day stays the same).
- Use only one patch at a time.
- To make sure the edges stick well when you put on your patch, press it down firmly with the palm of your hand for 10 seconds. Check this by running your fingers around the edge of the patch. Check that your patch is secure every day.
- Do not put the patch on skin that is red, cut, or scratched.



Diagram 1

### When do I change the patch?

- The day you put on your patch is your patch change day. Always put it on the same day of the week, at the same time. Follow instructions below.

When To Change Your Patch		
Week 1	Weeks 2 and 3	Week 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On your patch change day put on a patch.</li> <li>• Keep it on for 7 days.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On your patch change day take off the old patch and put on a new one.</li> <li>• Keep it on for 7 days.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On your patch change day take off the old patch.</li> <li>• This is the hormone-free break. Do not put on a new patch for 7 days.</li> <li>• Your period will start during this time.</li> <li>• You are protected from pregnancy during the hormone-free break.</li> </ul>

- Start your next cycle by putting on a new patch after the hormone-free break. **Put on a new patch even if you still have your period.**
- **Never have the patch off for more than 7 days in a row.**

### What if I am having trouble with the patch sticking?

- Try to put the patch on again or take off the old patch and put on a new one right away.
- Press down firmly on the patch with the palm of your hand for 10 seconds. Make sure the edges stick to your skin. Check this by running your fingers around the edge of the patch.
- Do not use bandages or tape to hold the patch in place as this affects how the hormones are absorbed.

## What if I forget to put on or change the patch?

At any time, if it is less than 24 hours do the following:

- If your patch has fallen off, try to put on the same patch. If you can't, put on a new one right away.
- If you are late putting on the patch, put it on right away.
- Your patch change day stays the same. You are still protected from pregnancy.

If You Forget to Put On or Change Your Patch (more than 24 hours)		
First Week of Use	Second or Third Week of Use	
Patch off or late more than 24 hours (or not sure how long)	Patch off less than 72 hours	Patch off more than 72 hours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put on a new patch right away. This cycle will have 3 patches.</li> <li>• Your patch change day stays the same.</li> <li>• Use an extra form of birth control (e.g., condoms) for 7 days.</li> <li>• If you have had unprotected sex in the last 5 days, or the extra form of birth control fails (e.g., condom breaks), think about getting emergency contraception to help prevent pregnancy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put on a new patch right away. Finish this cycle of patches, then start a new cycle of 3 patches. <b>Do not take the hormone-free break.</b></li> <li>• Your patch change day stays the same.</li> <li>• You might have spotting or miss your period this month. <b>Do not take off your patch.</b></li> <li>• You are still protected from pregnancy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put on a new patch right away. Finish this cycle of patches and then start a new cycle of 3 patches. <b>Do not take the hormone-free break.</b></li> <li>• Your patch change day stays the same.</li> <li>• You might have spotting or miss your period this month. <b>Do not take off your patch.</b></li> <li>• Use an extra form of birth control (e.g., condoms) for 7 days.</li> <li>• If you have had unprotected sex in the last 5 days, or the extra form of birth control fails (e.g., condom breaks), think about getting emergency contraception to help prevent pregnancy.</li> </ul>

## Can the patch cause blood clots?

In rare cases, women using the patch can develop a blood clot. The risk is higher if you:

- smoke
- are overweight
- are over 35 years old
- have a family history of blood clots
- have had a blood clot, heart attack, or stroke

## See your doctor right away or go to the nearest emergency room if you have:

- bad pain in your abdomen
- bad chest pain
- trouble breathing
- a bad headache
- numbness in your arms or legs
- eye problems (e.g., blurry vision, loss of vision)
- bad leg pain

## Important Things to Remember

- The patch:
  - must be stored at room temperature (never put it in your fridge or freezer).
  - might protect you from certain types of cancer (ovary and uterus).
  - will not protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STI).
  - can be used safely for many years (women do not need to “take a break” from the patch).
- If you need **major** surgery, ask your doctor about stopping the patch before surgery.
- Prescriptions and over-the-counter medications might affect how the patch works. **Check with your pharmacist about any medications.**
- You can get single replacement patches from your drugstore.
- Your periods might be more regular, lighter, or shorter with less cramping.
- Used patches still contain hormones. When you take off the patch, fold it inward so it sticks to itself and throw it away.
- Do not use the patch if you:
  - are pregnant or think you might be
  - are taking birth control pills
- You can get pregnant if you don’t use the patch properly.

*\*content amended with permission from Alberta Health and Wellness from SX0040 Jan 2006*

## Sexual Decision Making

- Choose to have sex or not—you have the right to make that decision.
- Choose to protect yourself from pregnancy and STIs.
- Use a condom every time you have sex to lower your risk of STIs.
- Talk with your partner about these choices before you have sex.

## For More Information Call:

### Sexual and Reproductive Health

Education/Health Promotion 403-955-6515

### Clinical Services

Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre	5 <sup>th</sup> floor, 1213–4 <sup>th</sup> St SW	403-955-6500
South Calgary Health Centre	31 Sunpark Plaza SE	403-943-9510
Sunridge Professional Building	406, 2675–36 <sup>th</sup> St NE	403-944-7666

### Website

[www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/programs/sexualhealth](http://www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/programs/sexualhealth)

For 24-hour nurse advice and health information, call Health Link Alberta at 403-943-LINK (5465) in the Calgary Area or 1-866-408-LINK (5465) toll-free.

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*This material is for information purposes only. It should not be used in place of medical advice, instruction and/or treatment. If you have questions, speak with your doctor or appropriate healthcare provider.*