

Contraceptive Patch

The contraceptive patch is a contraception method that has been available in Canada since January 2004. It is a 4 x 4 cm beige patch that sticks to a woman's skin and continuously releases the hormones estrogen and progestin into the bloodstream.

How does it work?

- The patch prevents pregnancy primarily by stopping the ovaries from releasing an egg, but it may also thicken the cervical mucus (making it harder for sperm to get into the uterus) and make the uterine lining thin. Its method of action is very similar to the Pill.
- Each patch is worn on the skin for seven days. One patch is worn each week for 3 weeks. The patch should be changed on the same day each week (called the "Patch Change Day"). The fourth week is patch-free, allowing a period to occur. The patch should never be off for more than seven days. Following the seven patch-free days, a new cycle is started when you apply a new patch on your Patch Change Day.
- The patch can be worn on the buttocks, stomach, back or upper arms, but not on the breasts. It may help to change the location a bit each week. The patch should be applied to clean, dry skin. You should not use any creams or lotions near a patch you're already wearing, or where you'll be applying a new one. The patch is very "sticky". You can exercise, shower, swim or go in a sauna or hot tub and it still sticks 98% of the time!

How effective is it?

- **Typical use failure rate:** 90 of 1000 women during first year of use
- **Perfect use failure rate:** 3 of 1000 women during first year of use
- The patch may be a bit less effective in women who weigh more than 90 kg (198 pounds)



Advantages

- + Highly effective, reversible and safe
- + Does not interfere with sex
- + May reduce menstrual flow and cramps
- + Regulates menstrual cycle
- + Decreases premenstrual symptoms
- + Reduces the risks of endometrial, ovarian and colon cancers
- + Reduces the risk of fibroids and ovarian cysts

Disadvantages

- May cause irregular bleeding or spotting
- May cause breast tenderness,
- nausea, or headaches
- May cause skin irritation
- May be less effective in women who weigh more than 90 kg
- Does not protect against STIs