

Birth Control Patch (Ortho Evra)

What is the birth control patch used for?

The birth control skin patch contains medicine that prevents pregnancy. The birth control patch is one of the most reliable forms of birth control. For every 1000 women who use the patch exactly as instructed for a year, 3 women may get pregnant during that time. The chance for pregnancy is higher if you don't carefully follow the instructions for using the patch.

The patch must be prescribed by your healthcare provider. The brand name of the patch is Ortho Evra.

How does it work?

The patch contains man-made forms of the female hormones estrogen and progesterone. They are the same hormones used in birth control pills. The hormones are on the sticky side of the patch. You can wear the patch on the buttocks, belly, upper body (front or back, except the breasts), or upper outer arm. When a patch is on your skin, the hormones move through the skin and into your bloodstream.

The hormones keep the ovaries from releasing eggs. If the ovaries don't release eggs, you cannot get pregnant. The hormones also cause a thickening of the mucus on the cervix and change the lining of the uterus. These changes also help prevent pregnancy.

When you use the birth control patch, your periods are regular and usually lighter. Menstrual cramps may not be as painful. The symptoms of premenstrual syndrome (PMS) may not be as bothersome.

What else do I need to know about this medicine?

- Follow the directions that come with your medicine, including information about food or alcohol. Make sure you know how and when to use the patch. Ask your healthcare provider if there are special precautions you should take when you start using the patch and what you should do if a patch comes off or you forget to change a patch. Remember that the better you are at using the patch according to the directions, the lower the chance that you will get pregnant.
- The birth control patch does not keep you from getting AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases. Latex or polyurethane condoms are the only method of birth control that can protect against the HIV virus and AIDS.
- Many medicines have side effects. A side effect is a symptom or problem that is caused by the medicine. Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist what side effects the medicine may cause and what you should do if you have side effects.
- Smoking while you are using this medicine increases the risk of serious side effects. Talk to your healthcare provider about ways to quit smoking.

- Keep a list of your medicines with you. List all of the prescription medicines, nonprescription medicines, supplements, natural remedies, and vitamins that you take. Tell all healthcare providers who treat you about all of the products you are taking.
- Try to get all of your prescriptions filled at the same place. Your pharmacist can help make sure that all of your medicines are safe to take together.

If you have any questions, ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for more information. Be sure to keep all appointments for provider visits or tests.

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