

What Is It?

The birth control skin patch is a small (1.75 square inch) adhesive patch that you wear on your skin. It is prescribed by a health care professional.

How Does It Work?

The patch releases hormones called estrogen and progestin, which are absorbed through the skin into the body. Estrogen and progestin stop your ovaries from releasing an egg. These hormones thicken the cervical mucus, which makes it harder for sperm to reach the egg. The hormones also thin the lining of the uterus.

How Do I Use It?

The patch can be worn on the buttocks, chest (except the breasts), upper back, upper arm, or abdomen. You wear a patch for a week at a time for 3 weeks in a row. During the fourth week, a patch is not worn, and you will have your period. After week 4, a new patch is applied, and the cycle is repeated. You apply the patch on the same day of the week even if you still are bleeding.

Benefits

- You do not need to remember it every day.
- It does not interfere with sex.
- It may make your period more regular, lighter, and shorter.
- It may reduce cramps, improve acne, reduce menstrual migraine frequency, and reduce unwanted hair growth.
- It reduces the risk of cancer of the uterus, ovary, and colon.

Risks

The patch is safe for most women. In some women, it is linked to a small increase in the risk of blood clots (deep vein thrombosis [DVT]), heart attack, and stroke. The patch is not recommended if you

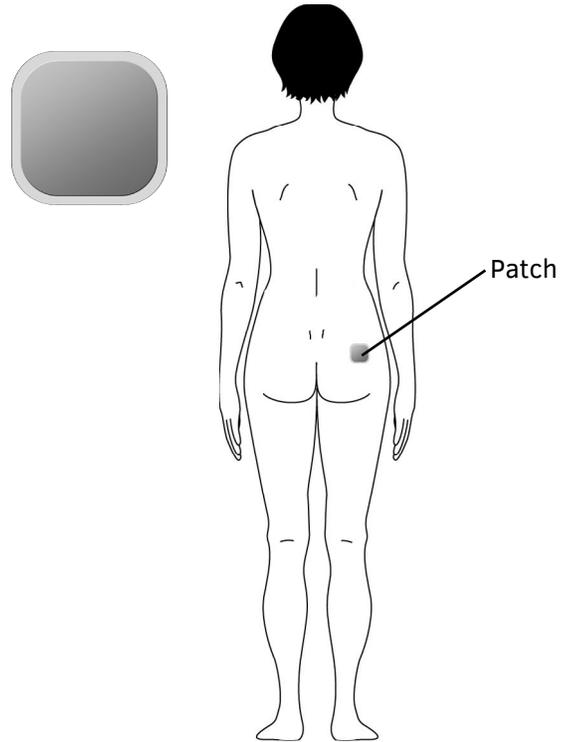
- smoke and are older than 35
- have high blood pressure or a history of stroke, heart attack, or DVT
- have a history of migraine headaches with aura
- have certain medical conditions, such as some forms of lupus
- have breast cancer or a history of breast cancer

The patch also may be less effective in women who weigh more than 198 pounds.

Possible Side Effects

- Breakthrough bleeding
- Breast tenderness
- Headaches
- Skin irritation
- Nausea and vomiting

Most side effects are minor and often go away after a few months of use.



Effectiveness of patch compared to other methods	Highly effective
	Less effective
Protects against STIs, including HIV?	No
Effective right away?	Yes, if you start using it within 5 days of the start of your menstrual period. If you start this method at any other time, avoid sexual intercourse or use a back-up method, such as a condom, for the next 7 days.
OK with breastfeeding?	Yes, after breastfeeding is established (usually 4 to 6 weeks after childbirth)

*Abbreviations: HIV, human immunodeficiency virus; STIs, sexually transmitted infections.