“THE PATCH”
(ORTHO-EVRA)

Background Information
Ortho-Evra, “The Patch”, is a thin, beige, flexible, square patch, which is applied to the skin once per week. Low-doses of estrogen and progestin (similar to hormones found naturally in the female body and hormones in oral contraceptive pills) are continuously released over a 1-week period. These hormones, when provided in adequate amounts, prevent ovulation—if there is no egg to meet the sperm, pregnancy cannot occur. In addition they have a reversible effect on cervical mucous and uterine lining, which also discourages pregnancy. Under ideal conditions, the Patch is 98-99% effective.

Like any other combination* hormonal birth control methods, there is no conclusive evidence that the Patch causes cancer. Recent data have shown a lower incidence of uterine and ovarian cancer in women who have used combination hormonal birth control methods. More research needs to be done regarding its relationship to breast and cervical cancer. Possible benefits of using combined contraceptives include a decreased incidence of: ovarian cysts, benign breast changes, iron deficiency anemia, pelvic infections, ectopic pregnancy, acne, menstrual cramps, and prolonged, heavy menstrual flow.

Choose a Back-up Method
To obtain continuous, effective contraception, plan to overlap with another method. It is important to have a back-up method of birth control (such as a combination of vaginal spermicide and condoms) to use during the first 7 days of Patch use, as the Patch may not fully protect you against pregnancy during this time. The back-up method you choose will also be useful if you run out of Patches, forget to change your Patch, experience danger signs and stop using the Patch, or want protection from sexually transmitted infections.

Instructions for Use
Ortho-Evra may be applied to buttocks, abdomen, upper back, or on the outer upper arms. Do not apply the Patch to your breasts. Always apply the Patch to a clean, dry, non-infected or irritated skin surface.

- **First Day Start** – Apply the Patch during the first 24 hours of your menstrual period, this will be your patch change day. Change your Patch every 7 days (example: patch applied on Tuesday; change the patch on the following Tuesday).
- **Sunday Start** – Apply the Patch the first Sunday after the first day of your menstrual period. Change the Patch every Sunday for 2 weeks. A back-up method is recommended for the first 7 days.
- After 3 weeks (i.e. the first day of week 4), the Patch should be removed for 1 week, to allow withdrawal bleeding (menses).
- After 1 week without the Patch, you should begin a new Patch cycle of 3 weeks on, 1 week off.

If the Patch falls off or peels off:
- Re-apply the Patch by pressing and holding in place with your palm until the patch adheres to the skin’s surface. Make sure the edges have a good seal.
- If the Patch will not stick, remove it, apply a new Patch within 24 hours. Change the Patch on the scheduled change day.

If the Patch falls off or is not secure for 24 hours:
- Use a new patch, start a new 4-week patch cycle. Use a back-up method for 1 week (7 days)

If you forget to change your Patch during week 2 or 3:
- On day 8 there may be enough hormones circulating to protect you against pregnancy. Replace the old Patch as soon as you remember. Change the Patch on the scheduled change day.
- After day 8 you are not protected against pregnancy. Replace the old Patch, start a new 4-week cycle. Use a back up method for 7 days.

If you have unprotected intercourse:
- Call a Clinic Advice Nurse and request information about Emergency Contraception.

If you forget to change your Patch during week 4:
- Take the patch off as soon as you remember.
- Start a new 4-week cycle on the scheduled Patch change day.
Answers to the most common questions about the Patch

What should I do if I am spotting or having my period (withdrawal bleeding) when I don’t expect it?

- Keep using the Patch. Consult a clinic Advice Nurse 643-7197.
- Practice abstinence or use a back-up method during intercourse until the problem is resolved.

If I miss a period (withdrawal bleeding) but I have used the Patch correctly, do I need to worry that I may be pregnant?

- Many women who use the Patch miss one withdrawal bleeding (period) every now and then. You probably don’t have to worry, but if you are concerned, consult a clinic Advice Nurse 643-7197.

Is there a risk of becoming infertile from using the Patch?

- There is no evidence that the Patch has long-term effects on fertility. In some cases it may temporarily take longer to become pregnant after stopping use of hormonal contraceptives. Most women resume full fertility within weeks of stopping use of the Patch.

Note: Decreased effectiveness has been noted in women at or above 198 lbs.

Temporary Minor Discomforts

Some women experience a variety of minor discomfors when starting combined contraceptives, including the Patch. Some of these symptoms may be nausea, breakthrough bleeding, breast enlargement or tenderness, slight weight gain, mood changes, and changes in libido. Most of these symptoms will disappear within the first three months of using the Patch. Acne, although often improved in the long run, may worsen for a couple of months when you first start the Patch. Other patch related problems include skin irritation at the site of Patch application and problems wearing contact lenses. If these symptoms persist, call a clinic Advice Nurse at 643-7197.

The Patch Danger Signs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abdominal pain (severe)</th>
<th>If you develop any of these symptoms:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chest pain (severe)/shortness of breath/coughing up blood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Headaches (severe)/dizziness/weakness/numbness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eye problems (vision loss or blurring)/speech problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Severe leg pain of calf or thigh</td>
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<tr>
<td>Call or immediately come to Urgent Care, 642-3188, or other emergency medical facility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Call 911 for ambulance in extreme emergency</td>
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Major Patch Complications

The most serious risks of combined contraceptives, including the Patch, are the potential for cardiovascular complications: blood clots, stroke, hypertension, or heart attack. These side-effects are extremely rare and occur most often in women who smoke, who are over age 35, who have other health problems like hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, vascular disease, or blood clots, and those who have a family history of diabetes or heart attack under the age of 50. If you smoke, you may have an increased risk for developing major complications. Young, healthy, non-smoking women can use the Patch with very little risk of developing serious complications. Learn the Patch Danger Signs listed above.

The Patch and Other Drugs

The Patch may have adverse interactions with some other medications. In some cases contraceptive effectiveness is lowered. In a few cases another drug may reach a toxic level in combination with the Patch. Be sure to inform your clinician and pharmacist at each visit of any medications, including non-prescription drugs, which you are taking.

The Patch doesn't protect against sexually transmitted diseases

Even though you are using the Patch, seriously consider using condoms as well in order to protect each other from sexually transmitted diseases (STD’s) eg, herpes, chlamydia, syphilis, HIV, etc.