

“THE PATCH” XULANE

Background Information

“The Patch”, is a thin, beige, flexible, square patch, which is applied to the skin once per week. The brand name Ortho Evra isn’t being produced anymore so ask for the generic Xulane. Low-doses of estrogen and progesterin (similar to hormones found naturally in the female body and hormones in combined 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. The average effectiveness of the patch is 91%. The effectiveness can be increased with consistent and correct use.

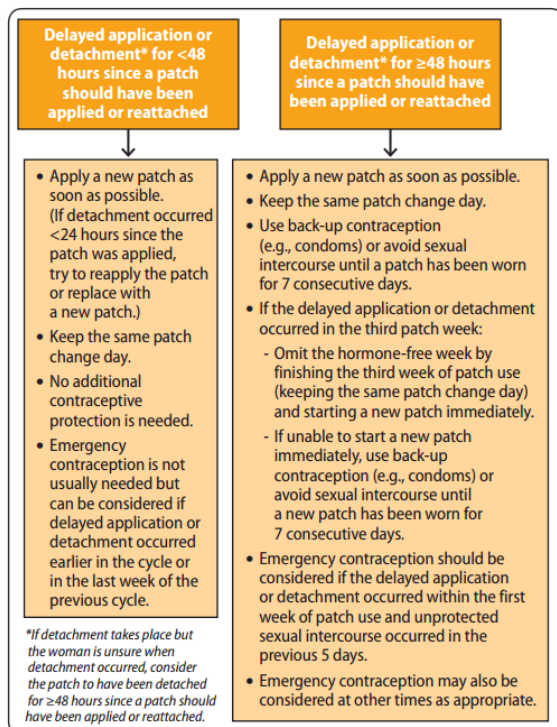
Like any other combined (containing estrogen and progesterone) hormonal birth control methods, there is no conclusive evidence that the Patch causes cancer. Recent data have shown a lower incidence of uterine and ovarian cancer in women who have used combination hormonal birth control methods. More research 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.

Instructions for Use

The Patch 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. **Apply a new patch every 7 days.** There are two recommended ways to start the Patch:

- Quick start: apply the patch the first day you pick up your prescription. Unless this is within five days of the start of your menstrual period, use a back-up method (i.e. condoms) for 7 days
- Start the patch within the first 5 days of the onset of your menstrual period, no additional contraception is needed
- After 3 weekly patches, the third Patch should be removed for 1 week to allow for withdrawal bleeding (menses)
- If you stop using the Patch and do not want to become pregnant, start using another contraceptive immediately, or abstain from vaginal sex. Your ability to become pregnant returns right away after you stop the patch.

Recommended Actions After Delayed Application or Detachment With Combined Hormonal Patch



Source: For the full recommendations, see the US Selected Practice Recommendations for Contraceptive Use, 2i

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**.

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

- Consult a clinic Advice Nurse **643-7197**.

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

Temporary Minor Discomforts

Some women experience a variety of minor discomforts 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. Patch-related problems include skin irritation at the site of Patch application. If these symptoms persist, call a clinic Advice Nurse at **643-7197**.

The Patch Danger Signs

<p>Abdominal pain (severe) Chest pain (severe)/shortness of breath/coughing up blood Headaches (severe)/dizziness/weakness/numbness Eye problems (vision loss or blurring)/speech problems Severe leg pain of calf or thigh</p>	<p>If you develop any of these symptoms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Call or immediately come to Urgent Care, 642-3188, or other emergency medical facility ▪ Call 911 for ambulance in extreme emergency
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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. **Always advise any clinician that you see for any medical problem, especially if admitted to a hospital or before surgery, that you are using the Patch.**

Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Preventive Care

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. Pap testing is recommended starting at age 21. See the UHS website for screening recommendations, self-directed testing and scheduling an appointment:

<http://uhs.berkeley.edu/medical/primary-care/sexual-health-care-tang>