

Flathead Family Planning  
1035 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue West, Kalispell MT 59901  
751-8150

## Information for Contraceptive Transdermal Patch

The contraceptive patch is a thin, flexible square of film that contains both estrogen and progestin. About seven in one hundred women may become pregnant while using the contraceptive patch.

### **BENEFITS:**

- \* Fewer menstrual cramps and bleeding
- \* Regular periods
- \* Less pain at ovulation
- \* Improvement in acne
- \* Reduced PMS symptoms

### **DECREASED RISK OF:**

- \* Ovarian or Endometrial cancer
- \* Benign breast tumors or ovarian cysts
- \* Ectopic pregnancy
- \* Anemia

### **RISKS/SIDE EFFECTS:**

- |  |                     |                                 |
|--|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| * Spotting between periods                                     | * Nausea            | * Change in libido              |
| * Weight changes (uncommon)                                    | * Breast tenderness | * Mood changes/depression       |
| * Menstrual/abdominal cramping                                 | * Headaches         | * Worse acne                    |
| * Decreased milk supply (breastfeeding)                        |                     | * Skin irritation at patch site |
| * Cardiovascular complications (including high blood pressure) |                     |                                 |

The patch may be less effective for women who weigh 198 pounds and more; these women should consider using a back-up or another method. To decrease your chances of serious problems, you need to go to an emergency room, doctor, or clinic if you have any of the following symptoms:

- A** Abdominal pain (severe)
- C** Chest pain or shortness of breath
- H** Headaches (severe)
- E** Eye problems -- blurred vision, flashing lights or blindness
- S** Severe leg pain (calf or thigh)

**ALTERNATIVES:** You may receive information about the other methods of birth control available. For situations of suspected contraception failure, emergency contraception is available and offers a second chance to reduce the risk of unintended pregnancy.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** You have received this information sheet about the contraceptive patch and how to use it. The contraceptive patch does not protect against STIs (sexually transmitted infections) or HIV.

**DECISION TO STOP USING:** You may stop using the contraceptive patch at any time. A woman is most likely to become pregnant if she or her partner does not use a method of birth control.

**QUESTIONS:** You may ask questions about the contraceptive patch at any time and may contact the clinic with further questions.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE CONTRACEPTIVE PATCH

The patch contains two types of hormones. Once you apply the patch to your body, these hormones are transferred continuously through your skin and into your bloodstream, where they prevent pregnancy.

### Where to apply and how:

1. You can wear the patch on your buttock, abdomen, upper torso (excluding the breast) or the outside of your upper arm.
2. You can select a different site each week. The patch must remain in place for seven days.
3. You can wear the patch in the same location each week; however, try to avoid placing in the same exact spot.
4. Do not apply the patch to skin that is red, irritated or cut.
5. Only one patch should be worn at a time. Check the patch every day to make sure it is sticking properly.
6. Always apply the patch to clean, dry skin. Avoid putting creams, lotions, oils, powder or make-up on or near the patch.
7. Open the foil pouch by tearing it along the top edge and one side edge.
8. The patch is covered by a layer of clear plastic.
9. Peel away half of the clear plastic. Avoid touching the sticky surface with your fingers.
10. Apply the sticky side of the patch on the skin you have cleaned and dried. Then remove the other half of the clear plastic.
11. Press firmly on the patch with the palm of your hand for 10 seconds, making sure that the edges stick well. Run your finger around the edge of the patch to make sure it is sticking properly.

### When to start:

There are three ways to start your contraceptive patch. You should use the approach your health-care provider suggests.

1. Start on the first day of menstrual bleeding. No backup contraceptive method is needed.
2. Start on the first Sunday after your period begins. Use a backup method for seven days.
3. Start today if you are certain that you are not pregnant. Use a backup method for seven days.

### When to change the patch:

1. Wear the patch for seven days (one week); on the eighth day, remove the used patch.
2. Apply a new patch on day eight (week two) and again on day 15 (week three). On day 22 (first day of week four), do not wear a patch. Your period should start during this week. You should never have the patch off for more than seven days.
3. Continuous or extended use of the patch are safe and effective methods of skipping or stopping your menstrual cycles.
4. Be sure to apply the first patch at the beginning of your next four-week cycle.

### How to skip your period using the patch:

Skipping or eliminating menstrual cycles may have benefits for some women, including avoiding monthly cycles and associated problems such as headaches, cramps and PMS.

1. Determine the month you wish to skip.
2. Continue to replace your patch once a week for the three weeks prior to wanting to skip your period.
3. After week three remove the patch.
4. Instead of not using the patch during week four and waiting for your period, put on a new patch during the fourth week (after you take the previous one off). This will keep your hormone levels constant, and by keeping a steady supply of hormones will eliminate your monthly withdrawal bleed.
5. Continue using a new patch once a week, for three weeks in a row.
6. When you reach the end of the third week on the patch, take it off, and your withdrawal bleed (period) should return.

### Tips for successfully skipping your period with the patch:

1. Make sure you have enough patches on hand.
2. Keep track of where you are in your cycle as you must immediately replace your old contraceptive patch with a new one at the third week of use.
3. If you only want to skip one period, as soon as you begin to put on your new contraceptive patch, during week four, continue as you normally would. However, if you want to skip the next month's period as well, just repeat steps two to five.

**How to remove:**

1. Simply lift one corner and quickly peel back. Fold the used patch in half so it sticks to itself before throwing it away.
2. If a small ring of adhesive is left on your skin, remove it by rubbing a small amount of baby oil on the area.

**If you forget to change the patch:**

1. If you are more than one day late in putting on your first patch: to avoid becoming pregnant, you must use a backup method for one week.
2. Apply the first patch of your new cycle as soon as you remember.

**If you forget to change your patch during week two or three:**

1. If you are only one or two days late, remove and apply new patch immediately.
2. Next patch should be applied on your normal patch change day.
3. No backup method is needed.
4. If it has been more than two days past your patch change date, to avoid becoming pregnant, you must use backup method for one week.
5. Remove the used patch and apply a new patch as soon as you remember.

**If you forget to take your patch off during week four:**

1. Take off the patch as soon as you remember.
2. Start your next cycle on your normal patch change day.
3. No backup method is needed.

**If your patch falls off:**

1. If less than 24 hours – try to reapply or apply new patch immediately. No backup method is needed.
2. If more than 24 hours or you are unsure how long it has been off or loose, apply new patch immediately. Start a new four-week cycle. Use backup method for the first week.