Types of Birth Control

**WHAT IS COMBINED HORMONAL BIRTH CONTROL?**

Combined hormonal birth control uses two types of hormones to stop you from getting pregnant. They are called estrogen and progestin.

**HOW DOES IT WORK?**

The hormones stop your ovaries from releasing an egg each month. When you stop this type of birth control you can get pregnant.

**WHAT CHOICES DO I HAVE?**

There are three types of combined hormone birth control:

- pills
- **skin patch** (Evra™)
- vaginal ring (Nuvaring™)

**IS BIRTH CONTROL SAFE & WILL IT WORK?**

- all of the above birth control methods are safe for most people and very effective at preventing pregnancy if used correctly
- some medications can interfere with hormonal birth control. Talk to your health care provider

**WHAT IS THE COST OF BIRTH CONTROL?**

- $15–25 at a pharmacy
- some clinics sell birth control for less (e.g. Youth Clinics, Options for Sexual Health)
- many youth clinics provide birth control at no cost to young people depending on their age

The Birth Control Patch - “The Patch”

**ADVANTAGES?**

- periods are regular and lighter with fewer days of bleeding
- less period pain and cramps
- sometimes helps with acne
- protects from cysts in the breasts
- can help with anemia (not enough iron)
- lowers risk of ovarian and uterine cancers
- only need to change the patch once a week

**DISADVANTAGES?**

- have to remember to change the patch on the same day each week
- may need a prescription to buy the patch at a drugstore
- does not protect from sexually transmitted infections

**SIDE EFFECTS**

Some women have side effects such as:

- nausea
- sore breasts
- skin changes
- mood changes
- skin rash
- spotting (bleeding between periods)

If you get side effects and they bother you, go back to a clinic to talk about other options before you stop using the patch.

**WARNING**

Reasons to get medical help:

- frequent or very bad headaches
- severe pain in your stomach
- severe leg pain
- chest pain
- difficulty breathing
- sudden change in seeing or speaking clearly

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Storing the patch: keep your patches out of really hot or really cold places.

**The Birth Control Patch DOES NOT protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).**

STI testing is recommended yearly and when you have a new partner. You and your partner can get tested at a youth clinic or by your health care provider.
**HOW DO YOU USE THE PATCH?**

**3 weeks on – 1 week off**
- Put the patch on right away (or on the first day of your next period)
  - Note what day of the week you put your patch on – this is your “patch change day”
- Put the patch on one of the following places: buttock, abdomen, upper body (not breasts), upper arm
- Change the patch once a week for three weeks on your “patch change day”. Use a different area of the body to prevent skin irritation
- On the fourth week you will not wear a patch. This is your hormone free week. You will get your period during this time
- After the hormone free week put a new patch on and start the cycle again. Put on a new patch on your normal “patch change day” even if you are still having your period

If you keep using your patch as directed you are protected from pregnancy all the time, including during your hormone free week.

**WHAT IF I FORGET TO CHANGE MY PATCH OR IT FALLS OFF?**

There is a chance that you can get pregnant if you forget to change your patch on the right day or if it falls off.

**MY PATCH CAME OFF**

- If the patch is partly off press it firmly against the skin for 10 seconds. If it does not stick, remove it and put on a new patch.
- If the patch comes off all the way, try to put it back on if it is clean. Press it firmly for 10 seconds. If this does not work, put on a new patch right away.
- If you do not know how long the patch has been off or it has been off for more than 24 hours, you may not be protected from pregnancy. Follow the “I forgot to change my patch” section.

If you have sex and do not use birth control you can become pregnant. You can also get pregnant if you do not use your birth control properly. If this happens, you can take ECP (e.g. Plan B™ or Norlevo™) to avoid getting pregnant.

Take ECP as soon as you can after unprotected sex (within 5 days but the sooner the better).

You can get ECP free at youth clinics and community health centres. You can also buy ECP from pharmacies (no prescription needed) and at some walk-in clinics.

To find out where you can get ECP call 1-800-SEX-SENSE.

**QUESTIONS**

If you have questions about your birth control, do not stop taking it. Call your health care provider or youth clinic or 1-800-SEX-SENSE.

Youth clinic hours may change.

Find the youth clinic closest to you at www.vch.ca/youthclinics

Find the clinic closest to you at:
- www.vch.ca/youthclinics
- www.optionsforsexualhealth.org

Sex Sense Line: 1-800-739-7367 or 604-731-7803

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**Do you more than 24 hours late changing your patch?**

**NO:** Put a new patch on right away, keep using your patch as normal. You are protected from pregnancy.

**YES:** You may not be protected from pregnancy.
- Put a new patch on right away. Change your patch in one week on the new “patch change day”.
- Use condoms as a back-up or do not have sex for 7 days
- Take the Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP) if you have had sex in the last 5 days.
- Call a youth clinic or 1-800-SEX-SENSE for more information.

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**You will be protected from pregnancy after the first seven days of using the patch. Use condoms as back-up for the first seven days.**

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