

## ORTHO EVRA<sup>®</sup> (The Patch)

### What is ORTHO EVRA<sup>®</sup>?

ORTHO EVRA<sup>®</sup>, also known as the birth control patch, is a type of prescription hormonal birth control that is placed on the buttocks, abdomen, upper torso, or upper outer arm to prevent pregnancy. A patch is applied to the skin and worn for seven days, then removed and thrown away, and a new patch is applied immediately. A patch is applied for 3 consecutive weeks and during the 4th week you will be patch-free and have a period. ORTHO EVRA<sup>®</sup> contains the hormones norelgestromin (a progestin) and ethinyl estradiol (an estrogen), which are similar to the hormones in most birth control pills and mimic women's natural hormones.

### How does ORTHO EVRA<sup>®</sup> work?

ORTHO EVRA<sup>®</sup> prevents pregnancy by transferring hormones to your body through your skin. This prevents ovulation (the ovaries do not release an egg) and also changes the thickness of the cervical mucus, making it harder for sperm to enter the uterus and fertilize an egg that might be released.

### How effective is ORTHO EVRA<sup>®</sup>?

When used correctly, ORTHO EVRA<sup>®</sup> is 99% effective.

Each patch delivers continuous levels of hormones into the bloodstream through the skin. The patch must stick securely to your skin in order for it to work properly. Certain drugs may interfere with the effectiveness of the patch. Please discuss any drugs you are using with your health care provider and pharmacist. A non-hormonal form of birth control (e.g. latex condoms) will be needed as a back-up method for the first week of using the patch.

The patch may be less effective for women over 198 pounds. Talk to your health care provider if you are concerned.

### Does ORTHO EVRA<sup>®</sup> protect against STDs?

**NO.** Just like all hormonal birth control methods, ORTHO EVRA<sup>®</sup> does not provide any protection against STDs, including HIV/AIDS. The most effective way of preventing infection, other than abstinence, is to use latex condoms correctly each time you have sex.

### What about side effects?

Some women who use ORTHO EVRA<sup>®</sup> have experienced breast tenderness, headaches, nausea, skin irritation, menstrual cramps, and abdominal pain. Most side effects of the patch are not serious and resolve over time.

The use of any hormonal birth control method containing estrogen can slightly increase the risk of rare serious side effects that can be life threatening, including blood clots, stroke, and heart attack. Smoking increases these risks. Please discuss your risks with your medical provider.

### Warning Signs

If you develop any of the following symptoms while using ORTHO EVRA<sup>®</sup>, you should call your health care provider right away. Remember the word "ACHES". It stands for:

- A** Abdominal pain (severe)
- C** Chest pains, coughing up blood, breathlessness
- H** Headaches (severe)
- E** Eye problems (blurred, double or loss of vision)
- S** Severe leg pain, swelling, numbness or tingling

---

(Warning Signs Continued from page 1)

**Other warning signs include:**

- Vomiting
- Dizziness
- Fainting
- Disturbance of speech
- Weakness or numbness in an arm or a leg
- Jaundice or yellowing of the skin or whites of eyes
- Fever
- Fatigue
- Dark colored urine
- Light colored bowel movements

---

**Who should NOT use ORTHO EVRA®?**

**Who should not use ORTHO EVRA®:**

- Pregnant women
- Women who think they may be pregnant
- Women with blood clots
- Chest pains
- Certain cancers
- Unexplained vaginal bleeding
- A history of liver disease, stroke, or heart attacks
- Women over age 35 who smoke 15 or more cigarettes per day

---

**Are there any health advantages?**

Over 70,000 patches have been tested worldwide on more than 3,300 women. Although there is no long-term data available, patch users can probably expect many of the same non-contraceptive advantages as women taking birth control pills, including a decreased risk of developing endometrial cancer, ovarian cancer, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), anemia, and ectopic pregnancy. Patch users may also experience less painful and lighter periods.

---

**When do I get my first patch?**

ORTHO EVRA® use is based on a four-week cycle. You apply your first patch within the first 5 days of your menstrual period, and then apply a new patch on the same day of the week (your patch change day) for 2 more weeks. You do not apply a patch during the 4th week and your menstrual period should start. On the day after week four ends, you should begin the next four-week cycle by applying a patch on your patch change day (no matter when your period started or ended). Never wear more than one patch at a time and never go without a patch for more than 7 days. Remember to use a back-up method, such as latex condoms, for the first 7 days after initially starting the patch.

---

**Where do I put the patch?**

The patch may be worn on the buttocks, abdomen, upper torso (front or back, excluding the breasts) or upper outer arm. You should place the patch in a different area each week to avoid skin irritation, but once you place it on your skin you should not move it around so that it won't lose its stickiness. Make sure to press down on the patch for 10 seconds with the palm of your hand to make sure that it sticks well to your skin.

**Do NOT put it in a place where it will be rubbed, such as under a bra strap.**

## What if I forget to apply a new patch or to take the patch off on time?

---

### If you forgot to apply a new patch on Week 1, Day 1

- If you forget to apply a new patch on Week 1 on Day 1, apply a patch as soon as you remember and this day will become your new patch change day.
- Since you might be at risk of becoming pregnant, use a non-hormonal form of birth control (e.g. latex condoms) as a back-up for one week.

### If you forget to change your patch on time in the middle of a cycle (weeks 2 or 3)

- If you forget to change your patch on time in the middle of a cycle (weeks 2 or 3), apply a new patch as soon as you remember and apply the next patch on your usual patch change day.
- If you were missing a patch for more than 48 hours (2 days), you might be at risk of becoming pregnant and need to use a back-up method for 1 week.

### If you forget to take off your patch during the fourth week

- If you forget to take off your patch during the fourth week, remove it as soon as you remember and start your next cycle on your scheduled patch change day.
- Never go without a patch for more than 7 days.
- If you are concerned that you may be pregnant, contact your health care provider as soon as possible and ask about emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs). You may want to keep ECPs at home just in case.

## What if a patch falls off?

---

Less than 5% of women have to replace a patch because it falls off or becomes partially detached. Check your patch daily. If your patch falls off, apply a new patch immediately. If the patch was missing for less than 24 hours you are still protected from pregnancy and your patch change day will remain the same. If you have gone without a patch for more than 24 hours or are unsure how long it was missing, a new cycle should be started and this day will become your new patch change day. Since you might be at risk of becoming pregnant, contact your health care provider to ask about emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs). If taken within 72 hours, ECPs can greatly reduce your risk of pregnancy.

## Can I surf or relax in the Jacuzzi while wearing the patch?

---

**Yes.** You need to wear an ORTHO EVRA<sup>®</sup> patch at all times during the first 3 weeks of your four-week cycle. The patch sticks very well to your skin and should not interfere with showering, swimming, playing sports or exercising.

## What else do I need to know to take care of the patch?

---

Do not cut, decorate or alter the patch in anyway. This will interfere with its effectiveness.

If your patch loses its stickiness, use a new patch.

Do not use lotions, oils, or make-up on your skin near the patch or where you want to apply the patch. Never use additional tape or wraps to hold the patch in place.

Patches need to be stored at room temperature in their protective covers.

## What about when I want to get pregnant?

---

Every woman is different, so you need to be prepared for the possibility of pregnancy immediately after you discontinue the patch. Some women may experience a slight delay in becoming pregnant. You may want to use a non-hormonal form of birth control until your menstrual cycles have become regular and you are certain you are ready to become pregnant.

**Warning/Notice**

---

Users of ORTHO EVRA® are exposed to about 60% more estrogen than users of typical birth control pills containing 35 micrograms of estrogen. In general, greater estrogen exposure may increase the risk of blood clots. However, it is not known whether women using ORTHO EVRA® are at a greater risk of experiencing these serious adverse events than those who are taking a birth control pill containing 35 micrograms of estrogen.

Legal actions are being taken against the manufacturer of ORTHO EVRA® because some people using this medication have had blood clots in their legs, lungs, heart, or brain. According to information gathered from federal death and injury reports by the Associated Press, about a dozen women, most in their late teens and early 20s, died in 2004 from blood clots believed to be related to the birth-control patch, and dozens more survived strokes and other clot-related problems. However, more than 4 million women have used ORTHO EVRA® since it went on sale in 2002, so the chance of serious risk is fairly small.

The FDA is not suggesting that women using ORTHO EVRA® change to another contraceptive method. However, Student Health Services wishes to provide our patients with the latest information. If you have concerns, please talk to your provider about how this information relates to your future use of ORTHO EVRA®.

**For More Information:**

---

Student Health Services .....619-594-5281 Facebook/Twitter.....Facebook.com/aztehealth &  
Health Promotion.....619-594-4133 @AZTEHealth  
Visit Our Website at ..... shs.sdsu.edu