



Ortho Evra (“The Patch”)

What is Ortho Evra?

Ortho Evra is a thin, matchbook size, beige colored contraceptive patch that contains both estrogen and progestin. It releases 150mg of norelgestromin (progestin) and 20mg of ethinyl estradiol (estrogen) every 24 hours. Each patch is sealed in a pouch that protects it until you are ready to wear it. These hormones are absorbed continuously through the skin and into the bloodstream. Hormones from Ortho Evra get into the bloodstream and are processed by the body differently than hormones from birth control pills. You will be exposed to about 60% more estrogen if you use Ortho Evra than if you use a typical birth control pill containing 35 micrograms of estrogen. In general, increased estrogen may increase the risk of side effects. Results of these studies ranged from an approximate doubling of risk of serious blood clots to no increase in risk in women using Ortho Evra compared to women using birth control pills. The risk of venous thromboembolic events (blood clots in the legs and/or the lungs) may be increased with the risk of Ortho Evra use compared with use of birth control pills. You should discuss this possible increased risk with your healthcare professional before using Ortho Evra.

When do I start the Patch?

Use of patch can be started on the Sunday following the onset of menses (your period) or on the first day of the normal menses. It can also be started the Sunday after an abortion. It is applied to clean, dry skin on the buttocks, abdomen, or upper outer arm. It cannot be applied to the breast or to irritated skin. The area where the patch will be placed cannot be covered with powder, lotion, or other products, which might interfere with its usage; nor can the patient use any of these products on or near a patch.

Schedule of Use:

The patch is in place for 7 days and then replaced. It is applied each week on the same day for 3 weeks, followed by a patch-free week, which is when you can expect your period.

Effectiveness:

Effectiveness rates are equal to the birth control pill, with perhaps better tolerance and consistent use. However, a woman whose weight is currently or exceeds 200 pounds may have a decreased effectiveness rate and may wish to choose another method or use a back-up birth control method such as condoms.

Contraindications:

You should not use Ortho Evra if you smoke cigarettes and are over 35 years old. Smoking increases your risk of serious cardiovascular side effects (heart and blood vessel problems) from hormonal contraceptives, including death from heart attack, blood clots or stroke. The risk increases with age and the number of cigarettes you smoke. You should not use Ortho Evra if you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant or if you have any of the following conditions:

- A history of heart attack or stroke
- Blood clots in the legs (thrombophlebitis), lungs (pulmonary embolism), or eyes
- A history of blood clots in the deep veins of your legs
- An inherited problem that makes your blood clot more than normal
- Chest pain (angina pectoris)
- Known or suspected breast cancer or cancer in the lining of the uterus, cervix or vagina
- Unexplained vaginal bleeding (until your doctor reaches a diagnosis)
- Hepatitis or yellowing of the whites of your eyes or of the skin (jaundice) during pregnancy or during previous use of hormonal contraceptives

- Liver tumor (benign or cancerous)
- Known or suspected pregnancy
- Severe high blood pressure
- Diabetes with complications of the kidneys, eyes, nerves, or blood vessels
- Headaches with neurological symptoms
- Use of oral contraceptives (birth control pills)
- Disease of heart valves with complications
- Need for a prolonged bed rest following major surgery
- An allergic reaction to any of the components of Ortho Evra

Tell your healthcare professional if you have ever had any of these conditions. Your healthcare professional can recommend a non-hormonal method of birth control.

Advantages, as compared to OCPs:

- Effectiveness equals that of oral contraceptives
- Weekly use as opposed to daily use
- Good cycle control
- Beneficial acne effect
- Quick resolve of fertility after use

Disadvantages/Side Effects:

- Irregular bleeding (tends to resolve after 3 months)
- Nausea (tends to resolve after 3 months)
- Irritation to skin (rotating the site every week will counter this)
- Weight gain, dizziness, migraine, stomach pain or bloating, vomiting, diarrhea, acne, tiredness, painful or heavy periods, mood swings, anxiety
- Breast tenderness (tends to resolve after 3 months)

Warning Signs

Call your doctor immediately if you experience any of these side effects with the Ortho Evra patch:

- Sharp chest pain, coughing blood or sudden shortness of breath
- Pain in the calf
- Crushing chest pain or tightness in the chest
- Sudden, severe, headache or vomiting,
- Dizziness or fainting,
- Disturbances of vision or speech,
- Weakness or numbness in the arm or leg
- Sudden partial or complete loss of vision
- Breast lumps
- Severe pain or tenderness in the stomach area
- Severe problems with sleeping, weakness, lack of energy, fatigue or change in mood (possibly indicating severe depression)
- Jaundice or yellowing of the skin or whites of the eye along with fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, dark-colored urine or light-colored bowel movements

Tell your healthcare professional about all of the medicines you are taking, before starting to use the Patch and while you are using the Patch, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, herbal and dietary supplements. The following medicines/herbal supplements may make your contraceptive less effective and you may need to use a barrier method (condoms and spermicides) when you take these drugs or products. Especially tell your healthcare professional if you take:

- Barbiturates (for example phenobarbital)
- Bosentan (Tracleer)
- Carbamazepine (Tegretol is one brand of this drug)
- Felbamate
- Griseofulvin (Fulvicin is one brand of this drug)
- Oxcarbazepine
- Phenytoin (Dilantin is one brand of this drug)
- Rifampin
- St. John's wort (a herbal supplement)
- Topiramate (TOPOMAX)