

For further information about this service contact:

**0300 300 3030**

or visit our website at <http://www.icash.nhs.uk>

Whatever way you use your patch, **if you make a mistake**



- ✓ Don't stop - carry on using it even if you start to bleed
- ✓ Use condoms or don't have sex for seven days
- ✓ Seek advice – read the leaflet or contact us on **0300 300 3030**
- ✓ If you often make mistakes using your patch **consider changing to a long acting method** (injection, implant, 'coil')

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Working in partnership with Terrence Higgins Trust in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, and with Brook in Bedfordshire



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For free, confidential health advice and information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year please contact NHS 111.



## Your Combined Patch

Congratulations, you have chosen an excellent method of contraception. Not only is it very effective at preventing pregnancy but it can also provide some non-contraceptive benefits.

This leaflet explains how to get the most out of your patch.



Firstly..

### How does the patch prevent pregnancy?

The hormones in the patch stop you releasing an egg each month. **No egg - no pregnancy!**

### What about other benefits?

There are many! One of the commonest is how it affects your bleeding. Most women bleed less and very importantly, the patch allows you to control when you bleed.

And next..

### How do I use it?

The **standard way** is to wear a new patch each week for 3 weeks in a row followed by a 7 day break. You will have a bleed in the week off. Then start a new patch on the 8<sup>th</sup> day. This will be the same day of the week on which you started your first patch.

But..

### Can't I get pregnant in the week off?

No, it's perfectly safe to have unprotected sex in your week off so long as you've **used your patch correctly** and remember to **apply a new patch on time**. Forgetting to restart **makes your break more than 7 days and is risky**.

So..

### How can I make sure my patch is as effective as possible?

The simple answer is to have fewer and shorter breaks! You could try the **fixed extended way**: use 9 patches in a row followed by a 4 day break, then another 9 patches followed by a 4 day break and so on. You will bleed every 9 weeks.

OR, even easier, you could try the **flexible extended way**: simply apply a new patch each week and take your breaks when you start to bleed. When you have 3 days of bleeding in a row (not just spotting), remove your patch for 4 days then restart and simply continue with a weekly patch until your next bleed. **Just make sure that you use your patch for at least 21 days** (replacing it each 7 days) before taking another break.

OR, easiest of all, the **continuous** regime where you use a new patch every 7 days without any breaks and whether or not you bleed.

But..

### Are the extended and continuous ways safe?

**Yes**, your doctor or nurse will have checked that the patch is right for you. The **standard** way gives you a regular monthly bleed as you would have without the patch. However, **there is no medical reason why women need a monthly bleed**. The latest evidence and expert guidance tells us that the **extended** and **continuous** ways of using the patch are just as safe even though you will use more patches than with the standard way.

And finally..

### What are the extra benefits?

Using the **extended** or **continuous** ways reduces the number of bleeds you have. This is really helpful if you bleed heavily, have a tendency to become anaemic or have pain or other symptoms associated with your bleeds. These new ways also put you in control – you don't have to have a bleed if it's not a convenient time for you.

### Which way will you choose?

	Patch days	Patch FREE days	
STANDARD	21	7	21 7
Choose this if	You are new to the patch and want to establish a routine first You want a regular bleed every 4 weeks Your bleeds don't bother you AND You are a very reliable patch user		
FIXED EXTENDED	63	4	63 4
FLEXIBLE EXTENDED	Any number - at least 21	4	Any number - at least 21
CONTINUOUS	Take a pill every day with no breaks even if you bleed		
Choose one of these if	You worry about remembering to start a new patch after a break You want to reduce your bleeding and associated symptoms You have previously become pregnant using the the patch, combined pill or ring		