



The Royal Children's Hospital Fertility Preservation Service Oestrogen Patch Information Sheet

What is Oestrogen?

Oestrogen is a hormone that is produced by the ovaries, which plays a role in controlling the menstrual cycle in the female reproductive system. During some types of chemotherapy and/or radiation treatment, oestrogen levels can decrease for a number of reasons. These reasons include weight loss, a reduction in active egg numbers, exposure to radiation in the ovarian region or due to the administration of Zoladex®; which keeps the ovaries inactive throughout. When there is a reduction in oestrogen production, this causes periods to stop and with that, can cause some uncomfortable symptoms such as hot flushes, mood swings or vaginal dryness. When oestrogen levels stay low for a prolonged period of time, it can also affect the mineral content in bones (bone density). For these reasons your doctor may recommend the use of an oestrogen patch during treatment.

How do Oestrogen Patches Work?

Oestrogen patches work by releasing a small amount of the oestrogen hormone through the skin into the bloodstream. Usually, a very low dose of oestrogen is used, much lower than the amount the body would normally produce. A small dose is used so that the body can still utilise oestrogen for the things it needs to like bone density, but not enough to cause periods to return.

Indication for use

1. After Zoladex® injections to protect bone density (the patches are only used for the duration of Zoladex® treatment).
2. To treat hot flushes or vaginal dryness during oncology treatment.
3. After chemotherapy or radiation treatment as hormone replacement therapy for those who need it.

How to Apply Oestrogen Patches

1. Patches come in a variety of doses, shapes and sizes. Each come with patient instructions. Please read and follow the instructions carefully. Ask your doctor if you have any questions.
2. Do not place the oestrogen patches on skin areas that have cuts, scrapes or burns. If it does get on these areas, rinse it off with water. The area of skin must be free of powder, oil or lotion for the patch to stick to your skin properly.
3. Wash your hands before and after application of the patch.
4. When you are ready to apply the oestrogen patch, carefully remove it from the protective pouch by tearing the package (do not use scissors as you may accidentally cut the patch).
5. The oestrogen patch is attached to an adhesive lining.
6. Peel off the backing from the patch and apply the patch to a clean, dry and hair free area of the skin, either on the abdomen and the upper thigh or the buttocks. Do **not** touch the sticky side of the patch. Try to avoid the waistline as clothing and belts may cause the patch to peel off.
7. Press on the patch firmly for at least 10 seconds and then press along the edges to ensure that the patch is firmly in place.

8. You may shower while wearing the patch. Contact with water may sometimes cause the patch to lift around the edges or fall off. To reduce this risk, you may reinforce it with Tegaderm® or another waterproof dressing if you feel necessary. If the patch falls off, try to reapply it on a new area of skin. If it does not stick completely, put on a new patch but follow the original schedule for changing the patches.
9. Change your patch as instructed by your doctor
10. Rotate the site that the patch is applied with each change. This can either be in the same area but changing between sides or you can change to a different area. It is important to use a different site each time you apply a new patch. If there is any sticky residue left on your skin, allow it to dry and then gently remove it with oil or lotion.
11. If you forget to replace your patch, apply a new one as soon as you remember.

Common side effects

The most common side effects seen while taking oestrogen patches are:

- A rash or local redness/reaction to the site
- Nausea, headache, irregular bleeding (usually short lived)
- Oestrogen treatment can very rarely cause clots in the legs that can travel to the lungs in severe cases. Oestrogen provided via a patch can minimise this risk, as it is directly absorbed via the skin and therefore can be administered in very small doses that reduces the risk of these side effects.

Who do I contact for further information?

If you would like any further information, please contact the Oncofertility team at RCH.

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