

Subway teen 1st 'patch' death

By MARSHA KRANES

The tragic death of 18-year-old Manhattan fashion student Zakiya Kennedy is the first linked to the use of a contraceptive patch, officials for both the manufacturer and the Food and Drug Administration said yesterday.

Investigators believe the aspiring model, who died Friday after collapsing in a Midtown subway station, succumbed to a rare side effect of the birth control patch, which she had been using for three weeks.

They're convinced — based on information from the Medical Examiner's Office — her death was caused by a blood clot that formed as a result of her using the patch.

"We're not aware of any other deaths associated with use of the contraceptive patch," said FDA spokeswoman Susan Cruzan.

Ortho Evra, manufactured by Ortho-McNeil, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson, is the only contraceptive patch with FDA approval, Cruzan said. It was approved in November 2001.

"Blood clots are a rare side effect," spokeswoman Mona Terrell said, adding that Ortho-McNeil is "following up with the medical examiner's office for more information."

Heartsick relatives said Zakiya had recently complained of leg pains, a common symptom of blood clots.

Officials said that when the teen collapsed on the subway she was not wearing a patch, which is routinely removed for a week after three weeks' use.

Her family blamed her boyfriend in her death after he pushed her in an argument minutes before she collapsed.

Additional reporting by Murray Weiss