

Depo-Provera

What is Depo-Provera?

Depo-Provera is a form of long-acting birth control which is given every three months as an injection. It prevents pregnancy for 12 weeks.

It contains a progesterone hormone called "medroxyprogesterone acetate".

How does it work?

Depo-Provera work by inhibiting ovulation (preventing release of the egg.) It causes a decrease in the sperm's travelling abilities by changing the cervical mucosa. It also inhibits implantation (attachment) onto the endometrium (lining of the uterus).

Advantages of Depo-Provera:

- Convenience, since only one injection is needed every 3 months
- Very effective; if used correctly, it is 99.7% effective
- Decreases risk of endometrial cancer
- Useful for women who cannot take estrogen
- Very few interactions with other medications

Disadvantages of Depo-Provera:

- Requires a shot
- Changes menstrual periods: Some women have lighter periods; some women do not have any menstrual periods at all
- Can cause unpredictable periods, spotting, or irregular bleeding, especially during the first few months
- Does NOT protect against sexually transmitted diseases such HIV, warts, herpes, gonorrhea, and chlamydia
- May increase acne
- May cause mild weight gain
- Long term use may cause decreased bone mineral density or decreases in HDL (the "good" cholesterol)

Possible Side Effects:

- Increase in acne
- Headaches
- Mild weight gain
- Mood changes
- Nausea
- Breast tenderness
- Irregular bleeding

Which women should not get Depo-Provera?

- Pregnant
- Undiagnosed irregular vaginal bleeding
- History of blood clots
- Allergy to the medication
- History of liver disease
- Breast cancer

How do I take Depo-Provera?

Depo-Provera should be given within 5 days after the start of your menstrual period. A pregnancy test must be done before the shot is given, because the medication would be harmful to an unborn baby.

The shot is given in the arm or buttock.

The shot needs to be given every 3 months. If you are late for the shot, you will have to use a back-up method against getting pregnant (e.g. a condom).