

Depo-Provera

An injectable contraceptive

What is Depo-Provera?

Depo-Provera (medroxyprogesterone acetate) is a drug very similar to progesterone, a hormone normally produced by the ovaries every month as part of the menstrual cycle. Depo-Provera is an injectable form of this medicine that prevents pregnancy for up to three months with each injection (“shot”).

How does it work?

Depo-Provera prevents pregnancy by stopping ovulation (the release of an egg from the ovary). If an egg is not released, pregnancy is unlikely. Depo-Provera is given as one shot in the buttock or upper arm. The first shot should be given within five days after the beginning of a normal menstrual period, and shots should be repeated every three months.

Is it effective?

Depo-Provera is as effective as tubal ligation (having your tubes tied) and more effective at preventing pregnancy than several other methods, including birth control pills, condoms and diaphragms. It does not, however, protect against sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS.

Is the effect permanent?

No. Depo-Provera only works for about three months. The shot must be repeated every three months to prevent pregnancy. After a woman stops using Depo-Provera, her normal ovarian function returns after a short time.

Are there side effects?

Most women have some changes in their menstrual periods while using Depo-Provera, including irregular and unpredictable bleeding or spotting, an increase or decrease in menstrual bleeding, or no bleeding at all. After one year of use, about two of three women have no bleeding at all. The absence of periods is not harmful, and periods usually return to normal after Depo-Provera is stopped. If unusually heavy or continuous bleeding occurs, you should see your doctor. Other possible side effects include weight gain, headaches, nervousness, abdominal discomfort, dizziness and weakness or fatigue.

Can I use it if I am breast feeding?

Depo-Provera can be used safely in women who are breast feeding. Long-term studies of babies whose mothers used Depo-Provera while breast feeding found no bad effects.

Who should *not* use Depo-Provera?

Women who have any of the following should not use Depo-Provera: liver disease, a history of blood clots (phlebitis) or stroke, vaginal bleeding without a known reason, cancer of the breast or reproductive organs, known or suspected pregnancy or allergy to the medication in Depo-Provera.

This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.



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