

# Depo-Provera

Depo-Provera is a long-acting progestin (hormone) form of birth control. It is injected into the muscle every 12 weeks. It is effective 24 hours after your first injection if given in the first 5 days of a normal menstrual period. It inhibits the secretion of hormones that stimulate the ovaries. This prevents ovulation. It also thickens your cervical mucus to prevent the entrance of sperm into the uterus.

## EFFECTIVENESS

When taken as scheduled (4 times a year/every 12 weeks), it is more than 99% effective in pregnancy prevention. Depo-Provera provides no protection against STIs (sexually transmitted infections). It is important to discuss STI (also called STI) protection with your partner.

## ADVANTAGES

- Effective for pregnancy prevention benefits
- If you have trouble remembering to take a pill, and do not want to use condoms, you only need to get a shot once every 12 weeks.
- It is reversible. Once you stop using it, you can usually become pregnant within 1 year.
- May be used by some women who cannot use the pill.

## DISADVANTAGES

- Irregular menstrual bleeding
- Can cause headaches, acne, weight gain, and depression.
- Long term use may decrease bone density. If left unchecked, may increase risk of osteoporosis.
- Must be prescribed by a health care provider.
- No protection from STIs.
- If given during pregnancy, may result in low birth weight baby.
- Ability to get pregnant may be slow to return.

If you have or have had migraine headaches, depression, heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, liver disease, asthma or a seizure problem, please tell your health care provider. Depo-Provera may make these problems worse.

## SIDE EFFECTS

The side effects are usually not serious, but it is important to realize that once Depo-Provera is injected, it cannot be reversed or neutralized. You will have to live with the side effects until the medicine wears off in 3 months.

*Menstrual Irregularities.* Bleeding, spotting and amenorrhea (not having periods) are common. After a year of Depo-Provera injections, 57% of women are not menstruating. After 2 years, 68% of women are not menstruating. If you stop getting Depo-Provera injections, your period usually returns within 3 to 10 months. Sore breasts, nausea, fatigue, and abdominal discomfort may occur.

*Pregnancy-Like Symptoms.* These symptoms conclude after the first 4 injections but usually go away. If you experience a spotty darkening of the skin (usually on the face), this symptom may not go away completely.

*Weight Changes.* Weight changes may occur due to increased appetite. Average weight gain is 3 pounds by the end of the 1st year and 5 to 7 pounds, total, by the end of the 2nd year.

*Depression.* Depression may occur but the cause is unclear. It does go away if you stop using Depo-Provera.

*Other Symptoms.* Other symptoms can include headache, dizziness, nervousness, some loss of scalp hair, some increase in body hair, decreased sex drive, leg cramps, and bloating. They may or may not be caused by Depo-Provera. Report any of these side effects to your medical provider immediately.

## SCHEDULING AN APPOINTMENT

Call 275-2662 to schedule an appointment at the University Health Service (UHS). UHS offers a full range of gynecological and contraceptive services. You can schedule an appointment with your primary care provider (PCP) or with one of the women's health nurse practitioners for gynecological care and to discuss contraceptive options. All visits to UHS are strictly confidential.

## LINKS

*To learn more about Depo-Provera, you can visit:*

<http://www.plannedparenthood.org/bc/depoforyou.htm>