

Injectable Contraception - Depo-Provera

How do I start the shot?

Injectable contraception is convenient and private. A shot every 3 months offers long-acting, secure protection. The shot is given in your arm.

- **Quick Start**

If you are reasonably sure you could not be pregnant you can have the shot today. You and your provider will discuss your current risk of pregnancy. If it is more than 7 days after your last period you will want to return for a pregnancy test at the end of your first month using this method

- **Next Period**

Another way to get started with injectable contraception is to wait until you get your next period and then come in for your first shot. Some people prefer to have their period before using the shot to assure themselves they are not pregnant.

- **Every 3 Months**

You need to get a new shot every 3 months. If you don't then you will risk an unplanned pregnancy. Remembering to return for your shots turns out to be a very common problem. Some suggestions to help remember to come back in three months include marking your calendar, setting an alarm in your phone, putting a sign on the refrigerator, enlisting the help of someone else or linking the date to a holiday or important event.

How effective is the shot?

This form of preventing pregnancy works extremely well. When used perfectly, the birth control shot effectiveness is more than 99%, meaning less than 1 out of every 100 people who use it will get pregnant each year. But when it comes to real life, the shot is about 94% effective, because sometimes people forget to get their shots on time.

When am I protected from pregnancy?

You will need to use a back-up contraception for 7 days after getting your first injection. After that, if you have a shot every 12 weeks, you are well protected against unplanned pregnancy. If it has been more than 14 weeks since your last shot you are at risk of unplanned pregnancy without another form of contraceptive. It is a good idea to have condoms and/or emergency contraceptive at home if needed.

Side Effects or Potential Problems

The most common side effect is an unpredictable change in your period. Even though most people stop having this side effect in 3 to 6 months, many people find this distressing. Talk to us about this if you are bothered by the changes in your period.

- **Weight:** In very large trials in many countries people taking Depo did not gain more weight than people who were not on Depo. However, it is clear that some people using Depo experience significant weight changes. We cannot predict who will gain weight. Watch your weight and if you are concerned, please talk with us.
- **Depression/Mood:** It is clear that for some people Depo makes mood problems stronger. If you are feeling depressed or experiencing serious mood changes, please come and talk to us.
- **Managing Irregular Periods:** The hormone in the shot is progesterone. It thins the lining of the uterus. After getting the injection most people will see their period change. It is not unusual to have irregular spotting after the first and even the second injection. By one year 60 % of people have stopped having a period completely. These changes are safe but can be unsettling if you are not prepared. These changes are not permanent.
- If these changes are concerning, if you are bleeding heavily or in pain, please talk with us.
- **Return to Fertility:** When you stop taking the shot your body must readjust hormones back to your natural pattern. This may mean that you have irregular periods for several months. A person can start ovulating immediately or up to a year after stopping Depo Provera.
- **Allergic Reaction:** This is a rare side effect. As a precaution we make you stay 15 minutes after your shot. If your shot is itching, red, hot, or bothered, come and see us!
- **Effect on bones:** Studies show that people taking this contraceptive lose bone mass during the time they are taking the shot. Bone mass returns to normal when people stop. Studies also show that people using injectable contraception **do not** have more broken bones. After 2 years on this method the FDA recommends discussing alternative forms of contraception. The World Health Organization disagrees and says people may use this method as long as they like.

Have questions?

Appointment Line: 831-459-2500
Nurse Advice Line: 831-459-2591
SHS Main Phone: 831-459-2211
Pharmacy: 831-459-2360

Depo Provera does not protect you against sexually transmitted infections. You must still practice safer sex and get regular STI testing.