

Bay Centre for Birth Control
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DEPO-PROVERA INJECTION

WHAT IS DEPO-PROVERA?

Depo-Provera is a hormone injection containing one hormone called progestin. It is given every 12 weeks to prevent pregnancy.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

- It stops the ovary from releasing an egg each month
- It thickens the cervical mucus making it harder for sperm to pass through the cervix (opening to the uterus)
- It thins the lining of the uterus making implantation of a fertilized egg difficult

HOW EFFECTIVE IS IT?

If given every 12 weeks the injection is more than 99% effective. Depo-Provera is one of the most effective reversible forms of birth control.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF DEPO-PROVERA?

- Very effective
- Does not require taking a pill every day
- Does not interfere with spontaneous intercourse
- Most women have very light or no periods after the first 6-12 months
- Decreases menstrual cramps
- Safe for women who are breast-feeding (at least 6 weeks post-partum)
- Can be used to treat endometriosis
- Considered safe for women who cannot use birth control methods containing estrogen. This includes women with:
 - *Severe migraine headaches
 - *History of blood clots in their veins
 - *Sickle cell disease – fewer sickle crises
 - *Smokers over age 35
 - *Complicated diabetes
 - *Women on medications that interfere with estrogen containing birth control

Women with some of these conditions may need closer medical follow up.

WHAT ARE THE DISADVANTAGES?

- Most women have irregular bleeding after receiving Depo-Provera. Usually the amount of bleeding decreases with time but it will always be unpredictable
- Weight gain (from 2 kilos per year) may occur
- Headaches may occur
- Breast tenderness and bloating may occur
- Mood changes/ depression may occur
- It is possible to become pregnant after a missed injection
- It may take up to 2 years after the last injection until you are able to become pregnant. However, for **most** women, fertility returns within 9 months after the last injection.
- It does not protect you from sexually transmitted infections

WHO SHOULD NOT USE DEPO-PROVERA?

You should consider other forms of birth control if you:

- Feel uncomfortable having irregular menstrual bleeding and/or no bleeding at all
- Plan on becoming pregnant within 1-2 years
- Are unable to return every 12 weeks for an injection
- Are allergic to medroxyprogesterone or any of the ingredients in the medication
- Are breastfeeding and are less than 6 weeks post-partum

Have medical problems such as:

- Abnormal undiagnosed vaginal bleeding
- Active liver disease
- High blood pressure (more than 160/100)
- Breast cancer or undiagnosed breast problems
- Have or may have cancer that is dependent on progestin
- Severe depression
- Risk factors for osteoporosis (thin bones)
- A history of heart attack, heart disease or stroke
- Vision problems because of a vascular disease
- Diabetes – please discuss with your family doctor

WHEN CAN IT BE STARTED?

Pregnancy must be ruled out before an injection can be given. To be sure we prefer to give the first injection of Depo-Provera at the following times:

- During the first five (5) days of a menstrual period
- Within the first five (5) days after an abortion
- Within the first five (5) days after a delivery if not breast feeding
- After breast feeding has been established, usually 6 weeks after delivery

If the first injection is not given at one of these times, a back up method of birth control should be used for two weeks after the first injection.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

Some women may experience thinning of their bones while on Depo. Most studies suggest that bones improve after Depo-Provera is stopped. It is unclear whether adolescents and young adults who are still building their bones will build their bones to normal peak levels if they use Depo-Provera. It is unknown if this increases the risk of bone fractures later in life. You should have your bone density monitored every 2 to 3 years while on Depo.

REMEMBER...

All women who use Depo-Provera should make sure they:

- Are taking adequate calcium (1200 mcg) and vitamin D (1000 IU/day) in their daily diet to help protect their bones
- Reduce their nicotine (smoking) and caffeine intake
- ALWAYS practise safer sex by using a condom every time you have genital contact, vaginal, oral or anal sex to reduce the risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection.

For more information call the Bay Centre for Birth Control at (416) 351-3700.