DEPO-PROVERA (DMPA)

What is Depo-Provera?

Depo-Provera is a long-acting form of birth control using only the progestin hormone. It is given by injection and repeated every 12 weeks.

How does it prevent pregnancy?

Depo-Provera prevents pregnancy by:
• stopping ovulation (release of an egg from the ovary)
• making the mucous of the cervix thick, which makes it harder for sperm to get through into the uterus
• thinning the lining of the uterus, which makes it difficult for a fertilized egg to implant

How effective is it?

• For typical users, approximately 3 out of every 100 women using Depo-Provera will experience an accidental pregnancy in the first year. With perfect use, 1 out of every 100 women will become pregnant.
• Depo-Provera starts working within 24 hours of the first shot if injected within 5 days of beginning a period.

How is Depo-Provera used?

• Depo-Provera is prescribed by a doctor and given as an injection once every 12 weeks.
• You should get your first shot within five days of beginning a period, unless you are presently using the Pill or an IUD.
• If you get your first Depo-Provera shot later than five days after your period, you will need to use condoms for the first seven days following the shot.
• If you want to continue to use Depo-Provera for birth control, you must return for another shot in 11 to 12 weeks, but no later than 13 weeks.

Who Can Use Depo-Provera?

• Depo-Provera is best for women who want a highly effective, private, long-acting method of birth control, without needing to take a pill every day or using a method right before sex.
• Depo-Provera may be a very good contraceptive choice for women who have completed childbearing, but don’t want tubal ligation.
• Depo-Provera may also may be a good choice for women who can’t use other birth control methods because of:
  • medical reasons
  • side effects they experienced using other contraceptive methods.
• If other methods a woman has tried are not working.
• Depo-Provera is safe to use while breastfeeding, especially if started after breastfeeding has been well-established (approximately 6 weeks post partum). Its risk of decreasing milk supply is less than with birth control pills.

Who Shouldn’t Use Depo-Provera?

Don’t use Depo-Provera if:
• You are pregnant, or want to become pregnant shortly (within a year).
• You have abnormal vaginal bleeding that hasn’t yet been discussed with a doctor.
• You have breast cancer.
• You take medication to treat Cushing’s syndrome.

It’s believed that DMPA doesn’t cause the complications associated with estrogen and the pill, and therefore may be safe for women smokers over 35.

Advantages
• It is highly effective and private.
• Menstrual bleeding usually decreases after one year of use. Some women stop having periods completely; this is a natural effect of the hormone. Your periods return to normal when you stop using Depo-Provera.
• It may decrease menstrual pain and premenstrual symptoms.
• You don’t need to remember to take a pill, insert a device, or apply a product. There is no need to keep birth control supplies at home.
• It can be used by breastfeeding mothers and women who can’t take estrogen (as in combined oral contraceptive pills).
• It will reduce risk of uterine cancer and ovarian cancer.
• It may reduce and treat endometriosis.

Disadvantages
• Irregular bleeding during the first year of use can happen.
• You need to return for regular 12-week injections.
• Minor side effects may occur such as headaches, breast tenderness, mood changes, and weight gain.
• Effects of Depo-Provera, including return to fertility, are not immediately reversible (may take 6–12 months).
• Depo-Provera does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.
• There may be possible effects on bone growth or density in young women, after 2 years of use you should speak to you Doctor to have a complete assessment.
• If you have a concerns or history of depression or mood disorders, you should speak to your doctor prior to initiating use.