
Get the facts about...

Depo-provera

Choosing birth control...

There are two ways to enjoy sex without getting pregnant....sex other than vaginal intercourse or vaginal intercourse with birth control. The use of birth control is an individual and private matter. It affects your body, relationships and lifestyle. There is no perfect choice in birth control. Get the facts you need and talk to people you trust. Always use latex condoms along with your birth control method to lower your chance of getting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including Human Immunodeficiency Virus or HIV - the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

What is depo-provera?

Depo-provera is a hormone that is given by injection (a needle). Each injection protects against pregnancy for three months. The injection is usually given in the buttocks, thigh or upper arm.

Does it protect me from STDs and HIV?

Depo-provera does not protect against STDs . Always use a latex condom when you have sex to reduce your risk of getting an STD or HIV infection.

How does depo-provera work?

Depo-provera releases a hormone (progesterone) . This hormone stops your ovaries from releasing an ovum (egg) each month. Where there is no egg, pregnancy cannot occur. Depo-provera makes the mucus in the cervix thicker. This makes it harder for sperm to get into the cervix. The cervix is the opening to the uterus (womb). It also changes the lining of the uterus so it is harder for a fertilized egg to attach to the uterus.

How effective is Depo-provera?

Depo-provera is very effective. It is more than 99% effective if you take the injection on schedule.

How often do I have to get the injection?

You need to get the injection once every 10-13 weeks (four times a year).

Where can I get depo-provera?

In Manitoba, you can get depo-provera from your doctor. For information on where you can get depo-provera at no cost, call Facts of Life Line or your local public health nurse.

What if I forget or can't come on time to get my three-month injection?

It is important for you to get your injection within 10-13 weeks of your last injection. If you wait longer than 13 weeks, you should have a pregnancy test done before your next injection. You should also use a barrier method for birth control (condoms, diaphragm, cervical cap etc.) for 3 to 4 weeks after a late injection.

Can any woman take depo-provera?

No, not every woman can take depo-provera. Women who have the following conditions cannot use depo-provera:

- pregnant or think you are pregnant
- vaginal bleeding with no known reason
- liver disease
- gall bladder disease
- past or current breast cancer
- high blood pressure
- heart disease
- diabetes
- hepatitis

If you have any questions or concerns regarding any of these health conditions, you should talk to your doctor or health care provider.

What are the side effects of depo-provera?

Most women using this method have bleeding between periods, heavy periods or no periods at all. Other common side effects include breast tenderness, weight gain, depression, headache or dizziness and a decrease in sex drive. It may increase the risk of diabetes and osteoporosis (decrease in bone density) later in life.

What are the advantages of depo-provera?

When a woman has a depo-provera injection within the first five days of her menstrual cycle or the first five days after she has given birth, it works immediately. It gives you protection against pregnancy for 12 weeks and it is highly effective. You do not need to remember to take it daily (as with the Pill) or before each time you have sexual intercourse (as with barrier methods such as foam or a diaphragm, etc.).

What are the disadvantages of depo-provera?

Depo-provera changes your regular menstrual cycle. You must remember to take the injection on schedule. It cannot stop immediately and the side effects are likely to last until the drug has totally worn off (it can take as long as 6-9 months after the last injection). It takes 6-24 months for your fertility to return after you have stopped using the drug. It does not provide protection against sexually transmitted diseases including HIV.

Remember...

- Depo-provera protects against pregnancy but does not protect against sexually transmitted diseases and HIV.
- Depo-provera does not protect against pregnancy once you stop taking it.
- Before you decide to use this method as your birth control, it is very important to fully understand how this method works and its side effects. You cannot stop the drug immediately and any side effects are likely to last until the drug has totally worn off. You might want to try using birth control pills (progesterone only or mini pills) for a few months before you decide to use Depo-provera. If you have any questions about this method, ask your doctor or health care provider.

Where to get more information:

You can get more information from your public health nurse, community health clinic, doctor or pharmacist.

You can call the **Facts of Life Line** to talk about birth control, sexuality, relationships, STIs and pregnancy options. **Call the Facts of Life Line at 947-9222 in Winnipeg or toll-free in Manitoba at 1-800-432-1957.**

You can also check out this website: www.serc.mb.ca.