

Birth Control Injection (Depo Provera®)

What is the birth control injection?

- Depo Provera®:
 - is an injection given to help prevent pregnancy
 - is given every 10–12 weeks in your arm or buttock
 - contains a hormone (progestin) that is similar to a woman's natural hormones (the shot does not have estrogen in it)



How does the birth control injection work?

- The hormone stops your body from releasing an egg each month. You cannot get pregnant if your body does not release an egg.

How well does Depo Provera® work?

- With perfect use, the Depo Provera® injection is 99.7 percent effective.

How do I start the injection?

- See your healthcare provider. You need a prescription for the birth control injection.
- If you get the injection during the first 5 days of your period, it starts to work within 24 hours.
- If you get the injection at any other time you need to use extra birth control (e.g., condoms) for 7 days.

How will the injection affect my period?

- Your period might become irregular. You can have spotting or bleeding between periods or miss your period. If bleeding is heavy or does not stop, talk to your healthcare provider.
- Your period might stop. After one year, 55–60 percent of women stop having a period. After 2 years, up to 68 percent of women stop having a period. This is not harmful.

What if I miss or am late for my injection?

- If you do not get your injection every 10–12 weeks, you can get pregnant.
- After your late injection, use an extra form of birth control (e.g., condoms) for 7 days, as you are not protected from pregnancy. If you have had unprotected sex during this time, or the extra form of birth control fails (e.g., condom breaks), see your healthcare provider. Think about getting emergency contraception, which can help prevent pregnancy.

Are there any side effects with the birth control injection?

- Depo Provera® can cause:
 - headaches
 - depression
 - feeling sick to your stomach
 - acne
 - less interest in sex
 - weight gain
 - sore breasts

If you have any of the above side effects, talk to your healthcare provider.

- Depo Provera® can increase your risk of thinning bones (bone mineral loss). The risk may increase if you are on it for a long time. After using Depo Provera® for two years, ask your healthcare provider if you should still be using it.
- The risk of thinning bones is higher if you:
 - have weak or brittle bones
 - have a family history of osteoporosis
 - have a small body frame
 - have an eating disorder
 - smoke
 - exercise very little or not at all
 - eat or drink lots of caffeine or alcohol
 - take steroids (e.g., prednisone)
- You can help keep your bones healthy if you:
 - eat foods high in calcium and vitamin D (e.g., milk, yogurt)
 - don't smoke
 - limit alcohol and caffeine
 - take calcium and vitamin D supplements (ask your pharmacist)
 - do weight-bearing exercises (e.g., walk, run, dance) every day

Important Things to Remember

- When you stop Depo Provera® it can take several months for your body to return to your regular cycle. You can get pregnant during this time, even if your periods are irregular.
- If you want to prevent pregnancy, you need to use another form of birth control 12 weeks after your last birth control injection was given.
- It takes some women 1–2 years to get pregnant after stopping the injection (many get pregnant sooner).
- Do not use the injection if you are pregnant or think you might be.
- The injection does not protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STI).

Sexual Decision Making

- Choose to have sex or not—you have the right to make that decision.
- Choose to protect yourself from pregnancy and STIs.
- Use a condom every time you have sex to lower your risk of STIs.
- Talk with your partner about these choices before you have sex.

For More Information

Sexual and Reproductive Health

Education/Health Promotion 403-955-6515

Clinical Services

Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre	5 th floor, 1213–4 th St. SW	403-955-6500
South Calgary Health Centre	31 Sunpark Plaza SE	403-943-9510
Sunridge Professional Building	406, 2675–36 th St. NE	403-944-7666

Website

www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/programs/sexualhealth

For 24-hour nurse advice and health information, call Health Link Alberta at 403-943-LINK (5465) in the Calgary area or 1-866-408-LINK (5465) toll-free.

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