Carolina Advanced Health

Depo-Provera Injection

"The Birth Control Shot"

What is Depo-Provera? How does it work?

It is an injection that you receive 4 times a year. It contains a synthetic hormone that stops a woman's ovaries from releasing eggs, or in other words, it stops ovulation.

How soon does Depo-Provera become effective?

When the injection has been given within the first 5 days of a normal menstrual period, you are protected from pregnancy immediately after you receive the injection assuming your cycles have been regular and no other hormonal birth control has been used. Use a back-up contraceptive (e.g. condoms and spermicides) after your first shot if the injection is given any other time in your cycle.

If you are in the middle of your cycle you will be asked to complete a urine pregnancy test to ensure that you are not currently pregnant. If the result is negative, you can receive the injection. However, remember to use another form of birth control for at least 7 days until the Depo-Provera becomes effective.

Depo-Provera's effectiveness is more than 99%, but only if injections are given every 13 weeks, regularly.

Advantages:

1. Nothing has to be taken daily or used at the time of sexual intercourse.
2. Depo is extremely effective. If women receive their injections right on time (every 13 weeks), only 3 women in 1,000 become pregnant in the course of an entire year.
3. Women lose less blood using Depo-Provera and have fewer menstrual cramps.
4. Frequently, after 3 injections, women have no periods at all. This is safe.
5. Privacy is a major advantage. No one needs to know you are using this method.
6. Nursing mothers can receive Depo-Provera injections; It is best to begin use after the baby is 6 weeks old and lactation has been established.
7. Depo may improve PMS, depression or symptoms from endometriosis.

Disadvantages:

1. Depo-Provera injection can lead to very irregular periods. If you bleeding pattern is bothersome to you, the rare medication you can take which will give you a more acceptable patter of bleeding.
2. Some women gain weight. To avoid weight gain, watch your calories and maintain an active lifestyle.
3. Depo-Provera does not protect you from AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases. Use condoms if you are at increased risk of contracting an STD.

4. You must return every three months for your injection.
5. Depression and premenstrual symptoms may become worse.
6. It could take a number of months before you periods return to normal after your last shot. It may take several months to begin ovulating regularly as well.
7. Depo-Provera may lower you estrogen level and cause bone loss; this risk is low and research demonstrates returning level of bone density upon discontinuation of the injections.
8. A few women are allergic to Depo-Provera. Fortunately, allergic reactions are rare.

Possible side effects:

The most common side effect is irregular or unpredictable menstrual bleeding. Note: After 1 year of use, many women (55%) will stop having periods altogether. Periods return within 6-18 months after you stop taking the injections. Most women become pregnant within 6 months to a year after stopping the injections.

Weight change, nervousness, dizziness, stomach discomfort, headache, and fatigue are possible side effects. Don't hesitate to call your doctor or nurse if you have questions or concerns about your medication, side effects, or effectiveness of the Depo.

Important:

Get your injections on time. Use the calendar provided to remind you when your next injection is due. It is safe to have your injections a week or two early, but if you wait longer than 13 weeks (3months), avoid sexual intercourse or use another form of birth control until you get your injection; then, continue to abstain from sexual intercourse or use another form of birth control for 7 days following the injection.

Lastly, the following may interfere with Depo-Provera:

Rifampin, Rifadin, Rimactant, Rofact, and aminoglutethimide (Cytadren) (Sushina) Syndrome, and cancer of the breast.

Please be sure to provide your doctor with a complete and accurate medical history, including other forms of birth control utilized, and all medications you are currently taking.