

DEPO-PROVERA

WHAT IS DEPO-PROVERA?

Depo-Provera is a contraceptive injection of a hormone similar to the natural hormone called progesterone which is produced in the body by the ovaries. Each injection of Depo-Provera protects you from pregnancy for about 12 weeks.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Depo-Provera stops the release of an egg from the ovary. If the egg is not released, you cannot become pregnant.

HOW EFFECTIVE IS IT?

Depo-Provera is a very effective contraceptive. If 1000 women were each to use it for 1 year, only four or five would become pregnant. It is more effective than the oral contraceptive pill. There are fewer accidental pregnancies with Depo-Provera than with oral contraceptive pills because you can forget to take a pill and the injection may last for more than 12 weeks.

CAN ANYONE USE DEPO-PROVERA?

Before you start using Depo-Provera you should tell us if:

- you could be pregnant
- you are breast feeding
- you have any unusual or irregular bleeding or spotting from the vagina
- cancer of the breast or genitals
- a history of severe depression
- disease of your heart, liver, kidneys or bladder

Your doctor will discuss these issues with you to decide if you should use Depo-Provera.

HOW DO I USE DEPO-PROVERA?

Depo-Provera is given as an injection. The first injection is given during a period, between Day 1-5. If it is given at this time you are protected from getting pregnant as soon as you have the injection. If you decide to use Depo-Provera after a recent pregnancy and you are breast feeding, you can have your first injection six weeks after the birth. It may be given after a termination of pregnancy or miscarriage at the time of a check-up (10-14 days post procedure) if abstinence from sexual intercourse is maintained. Other contraception should be used for the first week if not given at the time of a period. It is important that the injections are repeated every 12 weeks to make sure you don't get pregnant. Depo-Provera does not protect from STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections) so you may decide to use condoms as well as Depo-Provera if necessary.

ARE THERE ANY SIDE EFFECTS?

The main side effect of Depo-Provera involves periods. Periods often become irregular and sometimes last longer. Bleeding is not usually heavy. You may have continual light bleeding. After several injections, your periods may stop completely, approximately 50%. This is normal whilst using Depo-Provera and does not harm you. When you stop using Depo-Provera your periods will return to their regular cycle although this may be up to 18 months in some cases. Some women experience weight gain, headaches or depression whilst on Depo-Provera. Side effects can last for three months or longer. Talk to your doctor if you have any symptoms. It is recommended that Depo-Provera not be used longer than 5 years as it may increase risk of osteoporosis.

GETTING PREGNANT AFTER USING DEPO-PROVERA

Most women find that it takes about 7-10 months after the last injection of Depo-Provera to become pregnant although sometimes it takes a little longer. The number of Depo-Provera injections you have has no effect on how long it takes you to become pregnant. If you don't want to get pregnant after you stop using Depo-Provera you should use another form of contraception.