



Injectable Contraception FACT SHEET

Injectable contraception which is also known as Depo Provera® or the “shot” is an injectable birth control that is given once every 3 months. This shot contains a progestin hormone, depot medroxyprogesterone acetate, which is similar to progesterone, a hormone made naturally by the body. The shot prevents pregnancy by stopping an egg from being released from the ovary. It also changes the cervical mucus to prevent sperm from reaching an egg.

You must receive the shot every 3 months. If you receive your injections on time, the shot is effective at preventing pregnancy. For the typical women using the shot, the injection is 94% effective at preventing pregnancy.

The shot does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Condoms are the best way for sexually active people to reduce the risk of infection. Always use a condom to prevent STIs.

Advantages of the shot:

- Lasts for 3 months at a time
- Lighter menstrual periods – for some women, menstrual periods may stop completely
- Decreased pain with menstrual periods
- Nothing to do right before sex (to prevent pregnancy)
- Can decrease risk of uterine (endometrial) cancer
- Can use immediately after giving birth and when breastfeeding
- For women with epilepsy, the shot may decrease the number of seizures
- For women with sickle cell disease, the shot may decrease the number of sickle crises

Disadvantages of the shot:

- Must return to clinic every 3 months for an injection
- Less effective (higher risk of pregnancy) if you are late for receiving your injection
- Likely to have irregular menstrual bleeding or spotting, especially within the first 3-6 months of using the shot. This usually improves over time.
- Side effects – some women experience side effects such as weight gain, breast tenderness, or change in mood
- It is not possible to discontinue this medicine immediately. The effects of the shot will last approximately 14 weeks from the last shot.
- Most women have a delay in getting pregnant after stopping the shot. Most women are fertile (able to get pregnant) within 12 months of stopping the shot.

Risks of using the shot:

- **Decreased bone density** – the shot may cause a drop in bone mineral density (bone strength), particularly in young women (age 20 or younger) or women who use the shot for more than 10 years. However, this decrease improves after stopping the shot, and there is no evidence that this change will result in more fractures (broken bones).

The shot cannot be used by women who:

- Are, or think they are pregnant
- Currently have, or have a history of breast cancer
- Have liver disease
- Have abnormal vaginal bleeding that has not been evaluated

Tell your clinician if you have any of these risk factors or conditions, or of any other past or current medical problems or concerns. Your clinician will evaluate your history to help you decide if the shot is the correct choice for you.

Warning signs – Call your health care provider right away if you:

- Think you are pregnant
- Have been, or might have been exposed to an STI
- Have unusually heavy bleeding from the vagina
- Have increasing depression or change in mood

Regular physical examinations for routine health care, STI and cancer screening are strongly recommended.