Depo-Provera®

Depo-Provera® is a progesterone-only contraceptive and is one of the most effective methods of birth control. It has been available in 90 countries for over 30 years. When used correctly, Depo-Provera® can be 99.7% effective in preventing pregnancy.

On November 18, 2004 the following Black Box warning was added to the prescribing information:

Use of Depo-Provera Contraceptive injection may cause you to lose calcium stored in your bones. The longer you use Depo-Provera Contraceptive injection the more calcium you are likely to lose. The calcium may not return completely once you stop using Depo-Provera contraceptive injection.

Loss of calcium may cause weak, porous bones (osteoporosis) that could increase the risk that your bones might break, especially after menopause. It is not known whether your risk of developing osteoporosis may be greater if you are a teenager when you start to use Depo-Provera Contraceptive injection.

You should use Depo-Provera contraceptive injection long term (for example, more than two years) only if other methods of birth control are not right for you.

How does Depo-Provera® work?
Depo-Provera® prevents pregnancy in three ways:
• Prevents ovulation
• Suppresses the lining of the uterus
• Thickens the cervical mucous to prevent sperm from passing through.

How is Depo-Provera® given?
Depo-Provera® is administered as an injection (shot). It is available in 2 formulations:
1) 150 mg/ml intramuscular injection and;
2) 104 mg/0.65 ml subcutaneous injection

To assure there is no pre-existing pregnancy, it should be given within the first 5 days of the menstrual cycle, within 5 days after delivering a baby for non-breast-feeding mothers, or at 6 weeks after delivery if breast-feeding. Depo-Provera® may also be given immediately after an abortion procedure.

The shot is given in the buttocks or upper arm. Most women experience minimal discomfort. For some, the injection site may be sore for a day or so.

Your clinician will instruct you as to when the next injection is due. It is also safe to have the Depo-Provera® injection a few weeks early if the 3-month date is not convenient. If it is greater than 13 weeks since the last injection, use another reliable form of birth control (such as condoms and spermicides), or refrain from intercourse until the next injection is given.

Advantages
• Over 99% effective
• Provides contraceptive privacy
• Appropriate for women who are contemplating contraception for the first time
• Can be used by women over age 35 who may or may not smoke
• Provides alternative contraception for women who cannot tolerate estrogen or find that oral contraceptive pills are inconvenient and have difficulty remembering their daily pill
• There is no disruption or inconvenience during intercourse as with barrier methods, such as condom use
• A reversible alternative to sterilization
• Proven safe and effective for nursing mothers

Potential benefits
• Light periods or no periods
• Decreased occurrence of anemia (low iron)
• Decreased menstrual cramps and pain
• Suppression of discomfort associated with ovulation
• Decreased risk of developing endometrial cancer, ovarian cancer and pelvic inflammatory disease
• Management of pain associated with endometriosis
• Reduced risk of ectopic pregnancy
Depo-Provera®

- No common drug interactions (i.e. antibiotics)

Disadvantages
- Potential loss of bone density with long-term use
- Using Depo-Provera® for greater than 2 years is discouraged without careful consideration of other birth control options.
- Return visits to your healthcare provider every 3 months
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted diseases
- Possible side effects, which include
  - Menstrual changes which can range from irregular bleeding or spotting to having periods stop completely
  - Weight gain
  - Breast tenderness
  - Depression
  - Possible delay in the return of fertility for up to eighteen months after the last injection

The use of hormone-based contraceptives, including Depo-Provera®, may increase the risk of liver tumors and cardiovascular disorders such as phlebitis, strokes, heart attacks, and high blood pressure. For women who smoke, these risks are greater than for nonsmokers, and the risks increase with age.

How do I obtain Depo-Provera®?
To receive a prescription for Depo-Provera® you must be seen by a clinician for a review of your health history. Appointments for contraception are available at University Health Services. Your clinician can help you determine if Depo-Provera® is an option for you, based on your past medical history and your understanding of and comfort with this method.

A second visit to actually receive the Depo-Provera® shot for the first time may be necessary depending on where you are in your menstrual cycle.

Important If Choosing Depo-Provera®
If you are choosing Depo-Provera® as your birth control method, make sure you are getting adequate calcium, either through diet or supplementation. 1000 mg of calcium every day is recommended. Other bone healthy practices include exercising regularly and not smoking. You also need to get adequate vitamin D whether through diet or supplementation in order to ensure calcium absorption.

Please Read
Call your health care provider if you experience any of these symptoms following an injection of Depo-Provera®:
- Sharp chest pain, coughing up blood or sudden shortness of breath
- Sudden, severe headache or vomiting, dizziness or fainting, problems with eyesight or speech, weakness or numbness in an arm or leg
- Severe pain or swelling in the calf or thigh
- Severe pain or tenderness in the lower abdominal area
- Unusually heavy vaginal bleeding
- Persistent pain, bleeding, or signs of infection at the injection site

In an emergency go to Mount Nittany Medical Center or call 911 for an ambulance.

Test Results and Advice Nurse
Please call the nurse for test results and advice: 863-4463

Appointments
Appointments can be made online via the UHS website, by phone or in person. If you are unable to keep your appointment, please call and cancel. Otherwise you will be charged for the visit.

To schedule or cancel appointments call 863-0774 or schedule your appointment online through the UHS website

This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. This information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.