

Sexual Health

DEPO-PROVERA®



May 2010

Depo-Provera® is a long-acting form of hormonal contraception. This form of birth control does not contain estrogen. It contains progesterone. The woman receives an intra-muscular injection in her upper arm or buttocks once every 10-13 weeks. It is 97 – 99.7% effective in preventing pregnancy.

Depo-Provera® does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STI).

How does it work?

- Prevents the ovary from releasing an egg,
- Thickens the cervical mucus making it difficult for sperm to reach the egg.
- Changes the lining of the uterus making implantation difficult.

Advantages

- One injection lasts for three months, therefore no day to day routine.
- Effectiveness is not reduced by other medications.
- May be suitable for breastfeeding mothers.
- May be suitable for women over the age of 35 who smoke.
- Makes your period lighter; in 50% of women the periods will stop within one year.
- May improve the symptoms of endometriosis, premenstrual syndrome, and chronic pelvic pain.
- Reduces menstrual cramps.
- May reduce the risk of endometrial cancer.

Considerations

- Depo-Provera® may cause loss of bone mineral density that increases with duration of use. This bone loss may not be completely reversible. This means that there is an increased risk of developing osteoporosis, especially after menopause.
- Additional calcium is required to reduce bone loss.

- This is of greater concern if you are a teenager or young adult as this is the time when you should be building bone mineral density.
- Depo-Provera® should be used as a birth control method only if other methods have been considered to be unsuitable or unacceptable. If Depo-Provera® is used it should be used for the shortest period of time possible.
- Irregular bleeding and spotting which usually disappears after the first few cycles.
- May cause weight gain.
- Takes an average of nine months after the last injection to return to your natural cycle again.

Adapted with permission from the Middlesex London Health Unit.