

Depo Provera

How does it work?

Depo Provera is an injection of a hormone called progesterone. It is similar to a natural female hormone produced by the ovaries. To prevent pregnancy, Depo Provera is injected every 12 weeks. It prevents the ovaries from releasing an egg. It also thickens the mucus in the cervix, and thins the lining of the uterus.

Studies show that Depo Provera is 99.7 per cent effective. Depo Provera does not protect against HIV and other STDs.

Your first injection:

Depo Provera is given in the first five days of your period. The injection is in the buttock or the upper arm. It starts to work within 24 hours of the first injection. If it is given later in your cycle, a back-up method of birth control must be used for at least one week.

You will be protected from pregnancy for up to 13 weeks. To continue to be protected, the next injection must be given between 10 to 13 weeks, ideally at 12 weeks.

Depo Provera should not be used if you:

- are pregnant or think you might be,
- are currently diagnosed with breast cancer,
- have liver problems or liver disease,
- take medication to thin your blood (anticoagulants),
- wish to be pregnant in the next 1 or 2 years,
- are allergic to Depo Provera or any of its other ingredients, or
- have unexplained vaginal bleeding.

Benefits of Depo Provera

- Loss of menstrual periods which leads to reduced painful periods and anemia
- Reduced risk of endometrial cancer
- Reduced symptoms of endometriosis, premenstrual syndrome
- Possible reduced risk of pelvic inflammatory disease
- Possible decreased incidence of sickle cell crisis

What side effects might be noticed?

Changes in menstrual cycle: This could mean either irregular bleeding or no menstrual periods at all.

... over

Kingston
221 Portsmouth Avenue
Kingston, ON K7M 1V5
Tel: 613-549-1232
1-800-267-7875
Fax: 613-549-7896

Cloyne
P.O. Box 59
14209 Highway 41
Cloyne, ON K0H 1K0
Tel: 613-336-8989
Fax: 613-336-0522

Napanee
41 Dundas Street
Napanee, ON
K7R 1Z5
Tel: 613-354-3357
Fax: 354-6267

Sharbot Lake
P.O. Box 149
1130 Elizabeth Street
Sharbot Lake, ON K0H 2P0
Tel: 613-279-2151
Fax: 613-279-3997

Irregular bleeding is common but lessens with continued use. Abnormally heavy or prolonged bleeding occurs in only 1 to 2 percent of users. After one year of use, 55 per cent of women will have no periods (this is normal with Depo Provera).

Weight changes: Weight gain is thought to be due to appetite stimulation. Healthy eating and physical activity can help to control potential weight gain.

Other than the above side effects, headaches, acne, less interest in sex, nausea, and breast tenderness are most common.

Return of Fertility: the average length of time to get pregnant is 9 months after the last injection. Studies show that after 2 years, 92 per cent of women have conceived – this is similar to “the pill” and the IUD.

Bone mineral density changes are possible. Depo Provera may be a risk factor for osteoporosis along with race, family history, low height/weight ratio, sedentary lifestyle, and smoking. Increasing your calcium and vitamin D intake and bone strengthening exercises are important to include in your lifestyle.

Risk of cancer: Depo-Provera is associated with a decreased risk of endometrial cancer. There does not appear to be an increased risk of ovarian cancer or breast cancer. Studies suggest either a slight or no increased risk of cervical cancer.

Depo Provera warning signals:

- Headaches
- Heavy bleeding
- Depression

Contact the clinic if you develop any of the above problems.

Depo Provera does not appear to increase the risk of developing a blood clot. Knowing the symptoms will help you know when to seek medical attention.

- Severe abdominal pain
- Severe chest pain or trouble breathing
- Severe headaches
- Sudden eye problems such as blurred vision or loss of vision
- Severe pain or numbness in arms or legs

Women who are breastfeeding may use Depo Provera once breastfeeding is well established. Women over 35 years of age who smoke may use Depo Provera. Quitting smoking, however, is highly recommended for many health reasons.