

Where can you get the shot?

The “shot” is given by a doctor or qualified health care provider; it requires a prescription. Call your local family planning clinic for information.

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The Shot (injection)

How the shot works:

Depo-Provera® (Depo) is an injectable method of contraception (a shot) that is given every 3 months/12 weeks. It contains one hormone, a form of progestin. Depo works by stopping your body from releasing an egg, so no egg is present to be fertilized; it also causes the cervical mucus (liquid at the opening of the uterus) to thicken, which can stop sperm from getting into the uterus.

How to use the shot:

You are given an injection (shot) of Depo every 3 months/12 weeks. Depo may be given immediately after delivery of a baby; however, if you are breast-feeding, some doctors may delay it for six weeks. It can also be given immediately after an abortion.

Effectiveness:

About three women in 1,000 will get pregnant in one year if they get their shots on time, every 12 weeks (99.7% perfect use effectiveness). If you are late getting your shot, your chance of pregnancy goes up.



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Benefits of the shot:

Depo is easy protection from pregnancy; you don't have to remember to take a pill every day. You and your partner do not have to interrupt your sexual activity to use this method. Getting the shot is private and convenient. You may have very light bleeding or no periods after several months on Depo and no cramps or PMS. Depo can be used while breastfeeding. The shot is excellent short-term birth control for women who need effective birth control while waiting for a sterilization procedure.

There is no estrogen in Depo-Provera®; women who cannot take estrogen because of contraindications or side effects may wish to try Depo. As with other progestin-only methods of contraception, taking Depo lowers your risk of endometrial and ovarian cancer, anemia, ectopic pregnancy, and pelvic infection. Depo-Provera® has also been found to decrease the frequency of grand mal seizures and sickle cell crises.

Potential side effects and disadvantages:

When you first start on Depo, be prepared for irregular spotting or bleeding, especially during the first six months. You may also have increased appetite and slight weight gain or feel bloated, or have mood changes, nausea or occasional heavy menstrual periods.

Taking Depo-Provera® will lower your natural estrogen levels and might decrease the strength of your bones. It is very important to talk with your health care provider about Depo and “bone loss.”

Some women may develop higher cholesterol levels. Depo can make existing depression worse, and women who have severe post-partum depression should delay use of this method.

If you are getting the shot and want to get pregnant, you could be fertile within a month or two after your last injection. Depo-Provera® may stay in your body for six to twelve months and may delay a return to fertility.

Using injectable birth control will not give you protection against HIV (AIDS) or sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as chlamydia, herpes, genital warts (HPV), gonorrhea, hepatitis B and syphilis.

Potential risks:

Some women should not use the shot because of existing health conditions. Ask your doctor or health care provider about your risks.