

# Birth Control Injection

## *What is birth control injection?*

- Depo Provera is a birth control injection taken every 12 weeks to prevent pregnancy.
- The injection (shot) contains a hormone (progestin) similar to a woman's natural hormones.

## *How does the injection work?*

- The hormone injection stops your body from releasing an egg each month. You cannot get pregnant if your body does not release an egg.

## *How effective is the injection?*

- With perfect use, the Depo Provera injection is 99.7 per cent effective.

## *How do I start the injection?*

- Contact your birth control clinic or health-care provider to book an appointment to start the injection.
- If you start the first injection in the first 5 days of your period, it is effective 24 hours after the shot is given.
- If you start the first injection at any other time in your cycle, you need to use an extra form of birth control (e.g. condoms) for 7 days.



## *How often should I schedule my injections?*

- Injections should be scheduled every 10 to 12 weeks.

## *What do I do if I miss or am late for my injection?*

- If you do not return for your injection during the 10 to 12 week period that you are due, you can get pregnant. Contact your birth control clinic or health-care provider.
- Use an extra form of birth control (e.g. condoms) for the next 7 days as you may not be protected from pregnancy.
- If you have had unprotected sex during this time, or the extra form of birth control fails (e.g. condom breaks), contact your birth control clinic or health-care provider as you may want to consider emergency contraception, which can prevent pregnancy.

## *How may the injection affect my periods?*

- During the first 6 to 12 months of using Depo Provera, periods may be irregular. Spotting, extra bleeding or missed periods are not uncommon. If bleeding is heavy or does not stop, ask your health-care provider about ways to control it.
- After 12 months of using Depo Provera, periods may stop. About 55 to 60 per cent of women stop having periods. By 24 months, up to 68 per cent of women stop having periods. This is not harmful.

## What happens if I stop having the injection?

- You may have irregular, heavy bleeding or missed periods.
- **You can get pregnant during this time**, even though your periods are irregular or missed.
- It can take months for your body to return to a regular cycle after stopping Depo Provera.
- It may be harder for you to become pregnant for up to 1 to 2 years after you stop taking Depo Provera. However, many women get pregnant sooner. Start using another birth control method within 12 weeks of your last Depo Provera injection.



## Sexual decision making

Choose to have sex or not - you have the right to make that decision.

Choose to protect yourself from pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection (STI).

**Use a condom every time you have sex to lower your risk of STI.**

Talk with your partner about these choices before you have sex.



## Side effects of the injection?

- Depo Provera may increase your risk of developing osteoporosis if you:
  - have weak or brittle bones
  - have a family history of osteoporosis (weak, porous bones)
  - have an eating disorder
  - have a small stature
  - have a high caffeine or alcohol intake
  - smoke
  - exercise very little or not at all
  - use steroids, e.g. Prednisone
- Some women experience weight gain, headaches, acne, depression, less interest in sex, nausea or sore breasts. Weight gain is thought to be due to appetite stimulation associated with the injection.
- Depo Provera does not increase the risk of blood clots in the veins (deep vein thrombosis).

If you have any of the above side effects, **do not stop using Depo Provera**. You can become pregnant if you stop using Depo Provera. Talk to your health-care provider.

## For more information

Contact your physician, local community health centre or birth control clinic:

Calgary:	(403) 944-7111
Edmonton:	(780) 735-0010
Fort McMurray:	(780) 791-6263
Grande Prairie:	(780) 513-7551
Lethbridge:	(403) 320-0110
Red Deer:	(403) 346-8336

Or

Health Link Alberta (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)  
Edmonton, call 408-LINK (5465)  
Calgary, call 943-LINK (5465)  
Outside the Edmonton  
and Calgary local calling areas,  
call toll-free 1-866-408-LINK (5465)

STI/HIV Information Line 1-800-772-2437