



How does very effective birth control that you only have to think about 4 times a year sound to you?

What is Depo-Provera?

Depo-Provera, sometimes called “The Shot,” is a long-lasting injection that protects you from getting pregnant for a full 3 months. It contains a chemical similar to the natural hormone progesterone. It is one of the most effective birth control methods available. If your doctor agrees that Depo-Provera is a good form of birth control for you, he or she will prescribe it for you.

How does it work?

Depo-Provera stops your ovaries from releasing eggs, so they cannot be fertilized by sperm. Depo-Provera also causes changes in the lining of your uterus that make it less likely that you will become pregnant.

Benefits of Depo-Provera

- **It works.** Fewer than 3 percent of women who use Depo-Provera correctly will become pregnant.
- **It’s convenient.** You don’t need to remember to take a pill each day. Since you only need to get the shot every 3 months, you’re getting very effective birth control that you only have to think about 4 times a year.
- **It’s private.** No pills to keep at home.

Here’s how to use Depo-Provera

1. Start getting your shots as checked below:
 - ❑ Start within the first 5 days of starting your period. You are protected from pregnancy right away.
 - ❑ Start today:
 - The shot takes 7 days to start working, so either do not have sex or use condoms for the first 7 days.
 - Come in to repeat a pregnancy test after 3 weeks.
2. Come in to Kaiser Permanente to get your next shot in 3 months. If you didn’t get the shot at the time of your period, be sure to ask for a pregnancy test before getting another shot.
3. Always use a condom. Depo-Provera does not protect you from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

What are the side effects?

You may have these common side effects:

- **Changes in your period.** You won’t have your period every month. Instead, you’ll have irregular bleeding. This unpredictable spotting may be annoying, but is not a serious problem.

If you use Depo-Provera for more than a year, your periods may stop completely. Periods return within 6 -18 months after the shots have been stopped, and you will then be able to get pregnant.

- **Weight changes.** Some, but not all, teens who take Depo-Provera gain weight. If you are already overweight, you are more likely to gain several pounds with Depo-Provera. Eating lots of fruits and vegetables and cutting back on sweets, fried foods, and sodas can help you maintain your weight. Spending less time watching TV and in front of the computer can also help. Regular exercise is important, too. Aim for 60 minutes most days of the week.
- Other possible side effects may include tender breasts, headaches, and/or mood changes.

What about Depo-Provera and bone thinning?

Depo-Provera may cause bone thinning that increases the longer you take it. However, when you stop using Depo-Provera, your bones do recover. We do not know whether bone mass comes back completely or if using this form of birth control increases your risk of broken bones later in life.

If you want to continue taking Depo-Provera longer than 2 years, discuss the risks and benefits with your doctor. Bone mineral density testing (BMD) is not usually recommended for young women.

What can I do to protect my bones?

To keep your bones healthy:

- Do regular weight-bearing exercise, such as walking, jogging, or lifting weights.
- Eat a well-balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables, lean protein, dairy, and whole grains. Include extra Calcium and Vitamin D in your diet. You can do this with changes to your diet or with supplements.

We're glad you're taking charge of your health and protecting yourself against unwanted pregnancy. If you have any questions or concerns about taking Depo-Provera, check out the resources on the right or check in with your doctor.

For more information, check out:

- Kaiser Permanente: kp.org
- Kids Health, Teen Site: kidshealth.org/teen
- Go Ask Alice, Columbia University's Question and Answer Site: goaskalice.columbia.edu
- Planned Parenthood: plannedparenthood.org
- Visit your doctor's homepage at kp.org/mydoctor to use online health tools, view your preventive services reminders, check most lab results, and much more.
- If you are being hit, hurt, or threatened by a partner or being pressured to have sex, it can seriously affect your health. There is help. Call the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline at 1-866-331-9474 or connect to loveisrespect.org.

