



FACT SHEET

Contraceptive Injection (Depo Provera®) – Your Questions Answered

My next injection is due on the:

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What is the contraceptive injection?

Known as Depo Provera® in Australia, the contraceptive injection is a chemical similar to the hormone called progesterone which is injected into the buttocks or the arm every 12 weeks. The procedure only takes a few minutes and must be carried out by a doctor.

How does it work?

The contraceptive injection prevents pregnancy by slowly releasing the hormone into the body. The hormone is broken down over a period of 12 weeks, at the same time preventing ovulation (release of an egg from an ovary), preventing sperm from reaching any egg and preventing an egg from implanting into the uterus.

Will it work immediately?

If the injection is given within the first five days of the menstrual cycle (where day one is the first day of your period), then it is effective immediately. If however it is administered at another time during your menstrual cycle, another form of contraception (such as condoms) should be used for the next 14 days to avoid unplanned pregnancy. Your doctor will discuss with you the best time to have the Depo Provera® injection, as he/she firstly needs to ensure you are not pregnant.

How long will it last?

Each injection will provide contraception for a full 12 weeks only so it is important that you have regular injections every 12 weeks to avoid pregnancy. You should make regular, forward appointments with your doctor to ensure ongoing contraceptive cover. Ultimately it is your responsibility to make an appointment to visit your doctor.

How effective is it?

Depo Provera® is 99.9% effective – that is, if 1000 women used it for a year, only one of them might become pregnant. It is more reliable than the contraceptive pill as you only need to remember to have the injection every 12 weeks, instead of taking a daily pill. No contraceptive is 100% effective.

1800 003 707

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What are the side effects?

The most common side effect of Depo Provera® is irregular, intermittent bleeding patterns.

After the injection many women experience lighter periods and in many cases periods may cease altogether after one or two injections. This is not harmful and is often seen as convenient.

Some women experience longer periods or continual light bleeding for some weeks. In rare cases heavy bleeding may occur.

A small amount of weight gain may occur with Depo Provera®, but a large increase in weight is uncommon. Other side effects are rare but headaches, moodiness, acne, a loss of libido, abdominal bloating and fluid retention have been reported in some women.

If you are at all concerned about any symptoms you think may be caused by Depo Provera®, you should contact your Marie Stopes International centre on **Freecall 1800 303 707** or your doctor.

Who should not use Depo Provera®?

Before starting Depo Provera®, you need to inform your doctor if you:

- May be pregnant
- Have had a history of any unusual vaginal bleeding or spotting (including irregular or no bleeding)
- Have been treated for cancer of the breast or reproductive organs
- Have had severe depression
- Have liver disease
- Have heart problems such as high blood pressure or disease, or have had heart attacks
- Are planning on becoming pregnant in the near future
- Have had an allergic reaction to Depo Provera® in the past

Your Marie Stopes International doctor will talk with you about Depo Provera® and help you decide whether it is the best contraceptive method for you.

What if I want to stop using Depo Provera®? Is it reversible?

Once the contraceptive hormone has been injected it cannot be reversed for 12 weeks and, due to a continuing low level of hormone in the body following the final injection, there may be a delay in the return of the normal menstrual cycle. This may in turn delay the return to fertility between six months to two years.

The length of delay to fertility differs for everyone so it is important to remember to use an alternative form of contraception immediate following the final injection to avoid pregnancy. There is no evidence to suggest the number of contraceptive injections administered will affect the return to fertility rate.

No cases of permanent sterility have been reported following Depo Provera® usage and there have been no suggestions of an increase in birth abnormalities after using the contraceptive injection.

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What else should I consider?

- Contraceptive implants offer no protection against STIs or HIV/AIDS.
- Long term use may reduce the mineral content of bone in some women which can lead to osteoporosis.
- There is evidence that Depo Provera® provides some degree of protection against pelvic inflammatory disease and uterine cancer.

What if I am breastfeeding?

Please consult your doctor for advice about hormonal contraception such as Depo Provera® if you are breastfeeding.

How is Depo Provera® administered?

During your consultation, your doctor will firstly discuss and assess the suitability of the injection with you (including the advantages and disadvantages). Following your consent, the doctor will administer a small, quick injection of the contraception into your buttock or into the muscle of your upper arm.

Where can I get it from?

The contraceptive injection must be prescribed by a doctor from a Marie Stopes International centre, your local doctor or a family planning centre.

How much does it cost?

A 12 weekly Depo Provera® injection is available to those with a current Medicare card from Marie Stopes International for approximately \$20 (without a concession card). With a valid Centrelink card (health care or pension card) the cost is reduced.

**DON'T FORGET YOUR REGULAR BREAST CHECKS
AND BE SURE TO HAVE A PAP SMEAR EVERY TWO YEARS**

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