

## Fact Sheet

### Depo Provera Contraceptive Injection (the shot)

#### What is Depo Provera?

Depo Provera is a method of birth control that uses one type of hormone, a progestin, to prevent pregnancy. A health care provider gives you a shot of Depo Provera every 11-13 weeks. You must get another shot before the end of 13 weeks to continue to prevent pregnancy. Your health care provider will tell you when you can get the first shot.

#### How does Depo Provera work?

Depo Provera works by preventing ovulation (the release of an egg from a woman's ovary). It also makes the mucus in a woman's cervix (the opening to her uterus) thick, so that sperm cannot pass into the uterus to reach the egg. Depo Provera also thins the lining of a woman's uterus so that an egg cannot attach and develop into a pregnancy.

#### How well does Depo Provera work to prevent pregnancy?

Depo Provera works very well to prevent pregnancy. How well it works depends on if the shot is given on time. If 100 women use Depo Provera and get their shots on time, only one woman might get pregnant. If these same 100 women use Depo Provera for one year but don't get their shots on time, 6 women might get pregnant.

#### What do women like about Depo Provera?

- Depo Provera is a very effective method of birth control.
- This method of birth control is reversible (not permanent).
- Depo Provera is private (no one but you needs to know).
- You do not need to interrupt sex to use Depo Provera.
- You only need to remember to get the Depo Provera shot 4 times a year.
- Women who cannot use the hormone estrogen can use Depo Provera.
- Women who are breast feeding can use Depo Provera beginning at 6 weeks after delivery.
- Depo Provera may decrease how often seizures happen if you have a seizure disorder
- Depo Provera may decrease how often sickle cell crises happen if you have sickle cell disease.
- Depo Provera may decrease your risk of cancer of the ovaries and uterus.

#### What do women not like about Depo Provera?

- Depo Provera DOES NOT protect you from HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
- Almost all women using Depo Provera will have changes in their periods, like bleeding or spotting between periods, or longer or heavier periods.
  - ✓ One out of every two women have no periods after using Depo Provera for one year.Irregular bleeding is the most common reason that women stop using Depo Provera.
- You have to return to health center every 11-13 weeks for the shot.
- It may take from 3 months to 2 years for you to get pregnant after your last shot.
- Depo Provera may cause increased appetite and weight gain.
- Some side effects may last for several months after you stop getting Depo Provera shots.

## ABCD Family Planning

### What are the possible side effects of using Depo Provera?

- Changes in your periods
- Increased appetite and weight gain
- Bloating and constipation
- Breast pain or breast tenderness
- Changes in mood, nervousness, and depression
- Less desire for sex
- May take several months to get pregnant after the last shot
- Changes in skin (acne and rash)
- Changes in hair (hair loss)
- Headaches
- Nausea or vomiting
- Decrease in the good type of cholesterol
- Feeling dizzy
- Serious allergic reactions

Some woman's bones may become weaker when they use Depo Provera. For most women, bones will become as strong as normal a few years after they stop using it. For healthy bones all women should eat foods that have a lot of calcium, get regular exercise, and not smoke.

### Sometimes Depo Provera can cause very serious health problems.

- ✓ DO NOT use Depo Provera if you
  - have breast cancer
  - are pregnant or think you might be pregnant
- ✓ Talk with your health care provider about whether Depo Provera is safe for you if you have:
  - Liver disease or a liver tumor
  - History of blood clot, heart attack, or stroke
  - Diabetes for more than 20 years or diabetes that has affected your eyes or kidneys
  - Abnormal vaginal bleeding that has not been evaluated by a health care provider
  - High blood pressure
  - Lupus
  - You or someone in your family has osteoporosis (weak bones)
  - Any medical condition that may increase your risk of osteoporosis or if you use any medication that may increase the risk of osteoporosis
  - An allergy to the Depo Provera shot or any of its ingredients

### Return to the health center as soon as possible if you have any of the following:

- New or worse headaches
- Very heavy vaginal bleeding
- Now or worse depression
- Lower stomach pain
- Pain or bleeding that does not go away where the shot was given
- Rash, hives, or difficulty breathing after the shot

**Contact your health care provider** if you think you may have a sexually transmitted disease (STD) or if you want to stop using Depo Provera and start using another method.

- To decrease your risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), use a latex condom every time you have vaginal, anal, or oral sex.
- Emergency contraception (EC) prevents pregnancy when used no later than 3-5 days after unprotected sex. If you need EC or want more information, call your health care provider, family planning counselor, or pharmacist.