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### ▶ **What is Depo-Provera?**

Depo-Provera is a hormonal method of birth control that contains progestin. It is given by injection (shot) every three months to prevent pregnancy.

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### ▶ **How does it work?**

In a normal cycle, hormones cause the ovaries to release an egg about once a month. Depo-Provera works by:

- Keeping the eggs from leaving the ovaries (pregnancy cannot happen if there is no egg to join the sperm)
- Making cervical mucus thicker (to keep sperm from getting to the egg)
- Thinning the lining of the uterus (making it difficult for a fertilized egg to attach).

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### ▶ **How effective is Depo-Provera?**

The shot is 99.7 per cent effective (less than 1 in 100 females will get pregnant each year if they take the shot as directed). It does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

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### ▶ **What are the advantages to using the shot?**

- Reliable, reversible, very effective
- Lighter, or no periods after being on the shot for a year
- Convenient/private—only four shots/year, low cost—less than the pill, patch or ring
- Reduced risk of cancer of ovaries or lining of the uterus
- Very few drug interactions. However you should always check with your health care provider or a pharmacist before taking any other medications.

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### ▶ **What are the possible side effects or risks?**

- Irregular bleeding: most common side effect, especially during the first several months. This usually decreases over time. After a year on the shot, about half of the women stop having periods. Some women have spotting and light bleeding between periods and some have longer heavier periods.
- Weight gain: Some gain weight, some lose and others stay the same. Help to control your weight by eating a healthy diet and being physically active.
- Less common side effects: headaches, breast tenderness, nausea, acne, changes in mood, or decreased sex drive.
- Return to fertility: It may take six months to 2 years to get pregnant after stopping the shot. However most women are able to get pregnant within 1 year.
- Women with a history of depression may find that the shot worsens their condition. Speak with your health care provider.
- Reduced Bone Density: may cause temporary bone thinning (increasing the longer the shot is used). Bone growth begins again when the shot is stopped.
- Other risk factors: slim build, lack of exercise, smoking, poor calcium intake or family history of osteoporosis. Discuss with your HCP to decide if the shot is right for you. If you choose the shot, it would be important to get regular exercise and take enough calcium and vitamin D. A bone density test may be required.

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### **CAUTION**

#### ▶ **Seek medical attention at once if you notice any of the following:**

- Severe pain in your legs or abdomen
  - Severe chest pain, cough and/or shortness of breath
  - Blurring or loss of vision, speech problems
  - Severe mood changes
  - Infection at the injection site
- Contact your health care provider if any side effects continue after the first 3 months.

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#### ▶ **How do I use Depo-Provera?**

- Your health care provider (HCP) must prescribe the shot.
- Your HCP will ask about your health history and consider any other medical exam that you may need.
- You will be given information and have the chance to ask questions to be sure you understand all the information before starting the shot.

The first needle is usually given within the first five days of the start of your period and is effective 24 hours after the shot. After that, you need to get the shot within 12 weeks of your last injection (four times a year).

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#### ▶ **What happens if I forget to come in for my injection?**

- If it has been more than 13 weeks since your last shot, you may need to have a pregnancy test done before your next shot. You will also need to use another method of birth control, like condoms, until you get your shot and for two weeks after.
- If you have unprotected sex during a time that Depo-Provera is not effective, contact

the Sexual Health Clinic, your health care provider or a pharmacist about the need for emergency contraception.

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▶ **What else do I need to know?**

It is important to have a yearly physical, while you are on the shot.

Depo-provera is generally only recommended at 6 weeks post-partum and onwards for breastfeeding women.

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**Who can you talk to if you have more questions?**

If you have concerns or questions, call and ask for Sexual Health, or visit the health unit website below.



**simcoe  
muskoka**  
DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

Tel: 705-721-7520  
Toll free: 1-877-721-7520  
[www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org)

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▶ **Resources**

[www.sexualityandu.ca](http://www.sexualityandu.ca)

[Planned Parenthood](#)

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# Depo-Provera

