



9195 Grant Street, Suite 410
Thornton, CO 80229
Phone: 303-280-2229(BABY)
Fax: 303-280-0765

300 Exempla Circle, Suite 470
Lafayette, CO 80026
303-665-6016
303-665-0121

6363 West 120th Avenue, Suite 300
Broomfield, CO 80020
303-460-7116
303-460-8204

www.whg-pc.com

Facts about Depo-Provera® For Birth Control

This fact sheet explains the good things and the possible problems of Depo-Provera®. If you do not understand all of this information or if you have any questions, please ask your clinician. You should choose this method of birth control only after reading this fact sheet and talking about your birth control needs with your care provider.

What it is--Depo-Provera® is a long-acting form of birth control. It is an injection (a shot) given every 12 weeks under a doctor's supervision.

How Depo-Provera® Prevents Pregnancy--Each of your ovaries contains thousands of unripe eggs. About halfway between the start of one period and the start of the next period, an egg ripens and is released into the tube to the uterus. This is called ovulation. Depo-Provera® stops this from happening. Depo-Provera® also causes changes in your cervical mucus which prevent sperm from entering the uterus.

How Effective is Depo-Provera®?--Of 100 women who use Depo-Provera® for a year, less than one will become pregnant. In typical use, Depo-Provera® works as well as female sterilization and Norplant®, and is more effective than all other birth control methods, including the birth control pill and the IUD.

How Depo-Provera® is used--Depo-Provera® is given as an injection once every 12 weeks. The first shot must be given within 5 days after the beginning of a period, unless you presently are using the Pill or an IUD. Depo-Provera® starts working within 24 hours. The medicine slowly wears off over time and you cannot count on being protected against pregnancy after 12 weeks from the last shot. Therefore, if you want to continue to use Depo-Provera®, you must return for another shot in 12 weeks.

Who May Use Depo-Provera®--Depo-Provera® is most appropriate for women who want a long-acting method of birth control without the need to take a pill every day, or to use a method right before sex. Depo-Provera® may be a very good contraception choice for women who have completed childbearing, but who do not want to have a sterilization procedure.

Weight Changes--One of the effects of the hormone in Depo-Provera® is to increase appetite. As a result, about two-thirds of women who use Depo-Provera® gain weight, 20% lose weight, and 10% have no change in their weight. The average weight gain is 3 pounds by the end of the first year and 5 to 7 pounds by the end of the second year. Most women can avoid this weight gain by eating a low-fat diet and exercising regularly.

Mental Depression--This side effect may be worse in women who have had depression before. The cause is not clear. If related to Depo-Provera®, it will go away after the medication has worn off.

Other Possible Reactions--Other possible reactions that may or may not be caused by Depo-Provera® are sometimes reported.

They include:

*Headache

*Dizziness

*Nervousness

*Loss of scalp hair

*Increase of body hair

*Increase/Decrease in sex drive

Other medical drawbacks and risks--After Depo-Provera® is stopped, it takes an average of 9 to 10 months from the last shot before you can become pregnant. Some women become pregnant as easily as 3 to 4 months after the last shot, while for others it takes a year or more. By two years, pregnancy rates are equal in women who used Depo-Provera® compared to those who use the Pill or an IUD. Women who want more children in the near future should keep this in mind when deciding whether to use Depo-Provera®.

Depo-Provera® is found in breast milk. Depo-Provera® can be used by nursing mothers, as soon as 4 weeks after delivery, as it does not affect the amount or quality of the milk. However, this drug can show up in tiny amounts in the milk of nursing mothers, and thus it will be swallowed by the baby. Although no bad effects are known to happen, the long term effect of the drug on the baby is not known at this time.

Possible thinning of bones. A single research study showed that women who used Depo-Provera® for a long time had a slight decrease in the calcium in their bones, which can contribute to the development of a condition called osteoporosis. To find out whether this is true, more research on this subject will be done over the next few years. For all women, the best ways to prevent osteoporosis are to exercise, to have enough calcium in one's diet, and not to smoke cigarettes.