

## *Woman's Health Options*

### *Depo Provera (The "Shot")*

#### *What is the Shot?*

Depo Provera (Depo) is a hormone that is injected into your arm or buttock every 12 weeks. It stops the release of an egg and affects the lining of the uterus making the mucous at your cervix (opening of the uterus) thicker so that sperm cannot enter the uterus.

#### *Does it Work?*

Depo is 99% effective with perfect use. This means that one out of every 100 women will get pregnant in a year using Depo if they get a shot every twelve weeks. If the next Depo shot is administered after twelve weeks the chances of becoming pregnant are increased.

#### *How is it Used?*

- Get your first shot either today or within the next four days. If you do this you will be protected against pregnancy right away. If not, you should wait until your next period and take the Depo during the first four days of your period. If you do this, you will also be protected right away. **If you get the Depo Provera shot at any other time during your cycle you must assume that it will not be effective for the first 3 weeks. During that time, you will need to use a back up birth control method such as condoms.**
- You must return to your doctor or the Birth Control Clinic every 12 weeks for another shot to continue your birth control protection.
- It is important to be on time for each injection. If more than 12 weeks have gone by since your last injection, you need to start another method of birth control right away.

#### *What are the Advantages?*

Depo is very effective, convenient and private.

#### *Depo may be a good choice for you if:*

- You have had serious side effects with other hormonal types of birth control.
- You have trouble remembering to use other methods.
- You are a smoker and over 35.
- You are breastfeeding.

#### *Things to Think About:*

- **Your periods may change.** Most women have some irregular bleeding for the first six months they are on Depo. This may include spotting, not getting your period at all, or in a small percentage of women bleeding for the 12 weeks you are taking Depo.
- **Your periods may stop.** For most women who take Depo their periods eventually stop all together. This may happen in the first 3 months or take as long as a year.

- **You may gain weight.** You may gain about 1 to 2 kg (2 to 4 lbs) *per year* while on Depo. A small percentage of women will gain a significant amount of weight while taking Depo. However, many women have no weight gain and some even lose weight.
- **You may feel moody or depressed.** Some women who take Depo notice a change in their moods while taking Depo or feel sad.
- **After you stop using Depo,** you may have no periods, or changeable bleeding patterns for up to 1 year. Most women can get pregnant shortly after stopping Depo; however, for a small percentage of women it can take between one to two years to get pregnant.
- Depo may increase some women's risk of breast cancer. If you are over the age of 35 or have a mother or a sister with breast cancer, talk to your doctor.
- Depo is a risk factor in the development of osteoporosis (thinning bones), especially if you have close family members with osteoporosis. Pfizer Canada strongly recommends that women who use Depo Provera also take a **calcium supplement** and **vitamin D** (ask a pharmacist for dosage instructions), along with **regular weight bearing exercise** (ex: walking, jogging, weight lifting). It is also recommended that Depo be used as a last resort birth control and that women do not use it any longer than two years in an entire lifetime.
- Some less common side effects may be: headaches, less interest in sex, sore breasts and nausea.
- Depo does not protect against STDs.

If you have problems remembering when to get your next shot you can call Depo at 1-888-671-3376 and they will call you or e-mail you when it is time for you to have your next shot.

***For More Information Call:***

The Birth Control Centre	735-0010
Options Sexual Health Association	423-3737
Woman's Health Options	484-1124
STD Clinic	413-5156
Capital Health Link	408-5465

Canadian Women's Health Network  
Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada

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