

Title: Contrary to recent popular sentiment, the potential side effects of Depo-Provera® do not seem to outweigh its benefit as a highly effective contraception option in the majority of patients.

Author: Julia Morrow

Date: 08/12/2009

Key words: Depo-Provera, Birth Control, Side effects

Abstract: Depo-provera should always be one of the options suggested when doctors are discussing birth control with women looking for a very effective way to not get pregnant. The patient and doctor should also talk about possible side effects and common myths, especially regarding periods, mood, weight and bone changes. Finally, they should decide together whether the shot is ideal for the patient's situation and if the possibility of some of these side effects outweighs the risk of unplanned pregnancy.

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Primary Care Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up to date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.

Depo-Provera®: The Birth Control Shot



What about all the side effects I've heard about?

-Misinformation about side effects such as intense mood changes, large amounts of weight gain and loss of bone density have caused it to be less desired by patients today.

-Recent research shows that **weight** gain can be minimal, and some women lose weight. However, those who already have struggles with weight might gain the most.

-The density of your bone will most likely decrease mildly, but this is only temporary and usually comes back completely after you stop the shots

-There is no proven association with significant **mood** changes

❖ The Basics:

- A shot in your arm or buttock that you receive **every three months** at your doctors office
- Contains a hormone that is produced **naturally** in your body called progesterin
- Is one of the **most effective** methods of birth control when taken on time.

What are the chances of pregnancy while on Depo?

- Only 3 out of 1000 women on average would become pregnant in a year. Compared to 3 out of 100 with typical use of birth control pills.

❖ Pros: +

- You don't have to remember a pill every morning
- Likely decreased cramps and lighter periods, **often no periods** at all
- No interference with intercourse
- Safe for women who cannot take estrogen
- Does not increase the risk of blood clots, breast cancer other female cancers, or fractures after menopause
- Ok to take while breastfeeding
- **Private** method
- Highly effective at preventing unplanned pregnancy

❖ Is it for me?

“I...

- often **forget to take my pills** at the same time daily”
- wouldn't mind having lighter periods or **no periods** at all”
- am able to make it to the doctors office every three months for the shot”
- don't plan on becoming pregnant within the next 18 months”

For over 30 years, millions of women around the world have used Depo provera as a method of birth control

❖ Cons: -

- No protection against sexually transmitted infections
- Possible side effects (see left)
- Not for women with osteoporosis
- Not ideal for women who are very overweight
- May take up to 12 months to become pregnant afterwards
- It is not ideal for long term control, which currently means longer than 2 years

Please meet with your doctor for more information and to discuss:

- Questions about proper use and contraindications
- Less common side effects
- Other options for birth control