



Patient & Family Guide

2024

Depo-Provera[®]

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www.nshealth.ca

Depo-Provera®

What is Depo-Provera®?

- Depo-Provera® is a hormone. It is like the natural progesterone made by your ovaries each month.
- Depo-Provera® is used to prevent pregnancy.

How does Depo-Provera® work?

- Depo-Provera® is injected into your hip or arm using a needle.
- Depo-Provera® prevents pregnancy by:
 - › preventing an egg from leaving your ovary. This prevents fertilization (when an egg and sperm join).
 - › changing the lining of your uterus so it cannot receive a fertilized egg.
 - › making the mucus in your cervix (opening of the uterus) thicker and harder for sperm to get through.

How well does Depo-Provera® work?

- Depo-Provera® is 99.7% effective in preventing pregnancy when taken every 12 weeks.

How do I get Depo-Provera®?

- You will need a prescription. Once you have the medication, you will need to make an appointment with your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner), and bring the medication with you to your appointment.
- Your primary health care provider will give you an injection of Depo-Provera® every 12 weeks (4 times a year).

When does Depo-Provera® start working?

- Depo-Provera® starts working right away if you get it **within 5 days** after:
 - › starting your period.
 - › having an abortion.
 - › giving birth.

- If you get Depo-Provera® at any other time in your cycle, it will **not** be fully effective for 7 days (1 week). **Use a back-up method of birth control (like a condom and spermicide), or wait to have sex for 7 days after getting Depo-Provera®.**

Pros of Depo-Provera®:

- It is very effective in preventing pregnancy.
- It is easier to remember than taking a birth control pill each day.
- It is cheaper than birth control pills.
- It is not affected by other medications.
- It is private. No one will know that you are using birth control.
- After several injections, you may have lighter periods or no periods at all.
- You can take it if you:
 - › smoke and are 35 years old or older.
 - › are breastfeeding (at least 6 weeks after giving birth, once your milk supply has been established).

- It may lower your chance of getting:
 - › Endometrial (uterus lining) cancer
 - › Anemia (your blood is low in red blood cells or hemoglobin, or you do not have enough blood) because your period flow is lighter

Cons of Depo-Provera®:

- The following side effects may improve after 3 months:
 - › Irregular bleeding
 - › Skin rash
 - › Acne
 - › Changes in your weight
 - › Mood changes or depression
 - › Less interest in sex
 - › A slight increase in your risk of breast cancer
- You can get pregnant if you are more than 7 days late getting your next injection.
- After stopping Depo-Provera®, it may take up to 1 year to get pregnant.
- Depo-Provera® **does not** protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Who should not take Depo-Provera®?

- You should **not** take Depo-Provera® if you:
 - › are allergic to Depo-Provera® or any of its parts.
 - › are pregnant or think you may be pregnant.
 - › want to be pregnant within 1 year.
 - › have unexplained vaginal bleeding.
 - › have ongoing liver problems (like hepatitis C).
 - › have lumps in your breasts that have not been checked by your primary health care provider.
 - › are at risk for osteoporosis. Talk with your primary health care provider about your risk for osteoporosis if you smoke, eat a low calcium diet, do not exercise, or are planning to take Depo-Provera® for longer than 5 years.

If you have any changes in your health or in the way you feel while taking Depo-Provera®, talk with your primary health care provider.

Remember:

- **Your next injection is due in 12 weeks.**
- Plan to have your next injection early if you know you will be away when it is due.
- Not having a period **does not** mean you are pregnant. **You may be pregnant if:**
 - › you missed your period and have other pregnancy symptoms, like sore breasts, nausea (feeling sick to your stomach), or vomiting (throwing up).
 - › you missed your period and are more than 7 days late for your Depo-Provera[®] injection.

Will Depo-Provera[®] protect me from sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?

- Depo-Provera[®] **does not** protect you from STIs, like:
 - › Herpes
 - › Chlamydia
 - › Genital warts
 - › Gonorrhea
 - › HIV (the virus that causes AIDS)

Use a condom every time you have sex to protect against STIs.

For more information on sexual and reproductive health, visit:

- › www.sexandu.ca

Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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