

## Effectiveness

The shot is over 99% effective when used correctly. If 1,000 women get their shot on time for a year, only 3 of them will get pregnant. The shot is less effective if you get it late.

**REMEMBER:** Using Depo correctly means getting your shot on time (every 12 weeks), every time.

**EC: Don't Forget About Emergency Contraception (EC)! If you're more than 2 weeks late getting your shot, and you have unprotected sex, EC can help prevent you from getting pregnant.**

## Pregnancy and Depo

After stopping Depo, some women are able to get pregnant **right away**. But for other women, it can take from 3 to 18 months for their ability to get pregnant to return. If you **know** you don't want to be pregnant right away, start using another birth control method. If you do want to become pregnant, start taking vitamins with folic acid — it's one of the best things you can do for your future child.

**FACT: Most women will become pregnant within a year of their last shot if they don't use any other birth control method.**

## Common Questions

### What happens if I'm late getting my shot?

Make an appointment to get your shot as soon as possible! You are at risk of getting pregnant if you are **more than 2 weeks late**. To protect yourself from pregnancy, use a back-up method like condoms until you get your shot, and then for 7 days after.

### What if I miss my period on "the shot"?

If you got your shot late, or if it was your first shot, call the clinic to schedule a pregnancy test. If you got your shot on time, there is almost no chance of getting pregnant.

**Remember:** once you have been on "the shot" for a year or more, it is **normal** to miss a period.

### Can Depo make you moody?

Progesterone, the female hormone in "the shot", can make some women feel more moody or depressed. This doesn't mean that all women who use "the shot" will get depressed. In fact, **most do not**.

### If I use Depo, will it make my bones weak?

Studies show that Depo decreases a woman's bone strength (bone density) while she is on "the shot". Once a woman stops using Depo, her bone strength increases again. All women who are on "the shot" for 18 months or longer need to get regular exercise, make sure they get enough calcium, and **stop smoking**.

### Is it bad to stop having my periods?

No! Having your periods stop because of Depo is **not** harmful to you. Your periods stop because your ovaries go into a "resting state" while you are on Depo, and your body does not need to have a period. Once women know it is safe, most feel much better about not having their periods, and some even like it.

## To learn more about other reversible birth control methods: Check out our brochures on:

The Pill  
Emergency Contraception ("EC")  
Condoms  
The IUD  
The Patch  
The Ring

## Check out our website at:

[www.kingcounty.gov/health/famplan](http://www.kingcounty.gov/health/famplan)

## To find a Family Planning Provider near you:

Call the Family Planning Hotline  
1-800-770-4334 **OR** TTY 1-800-848-5429  
For confidential information and referrals

## To prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex, or after your birth control method fails:

Call the Emergency Contraception Hotline:  
1-888-NOT-2-LATE (1-888-668-2528)  
or check out the Emergency Contraception website:  
[www.not-2-late.com](http://www.not-2-late.com) to find a clinic or pharmacy near you.

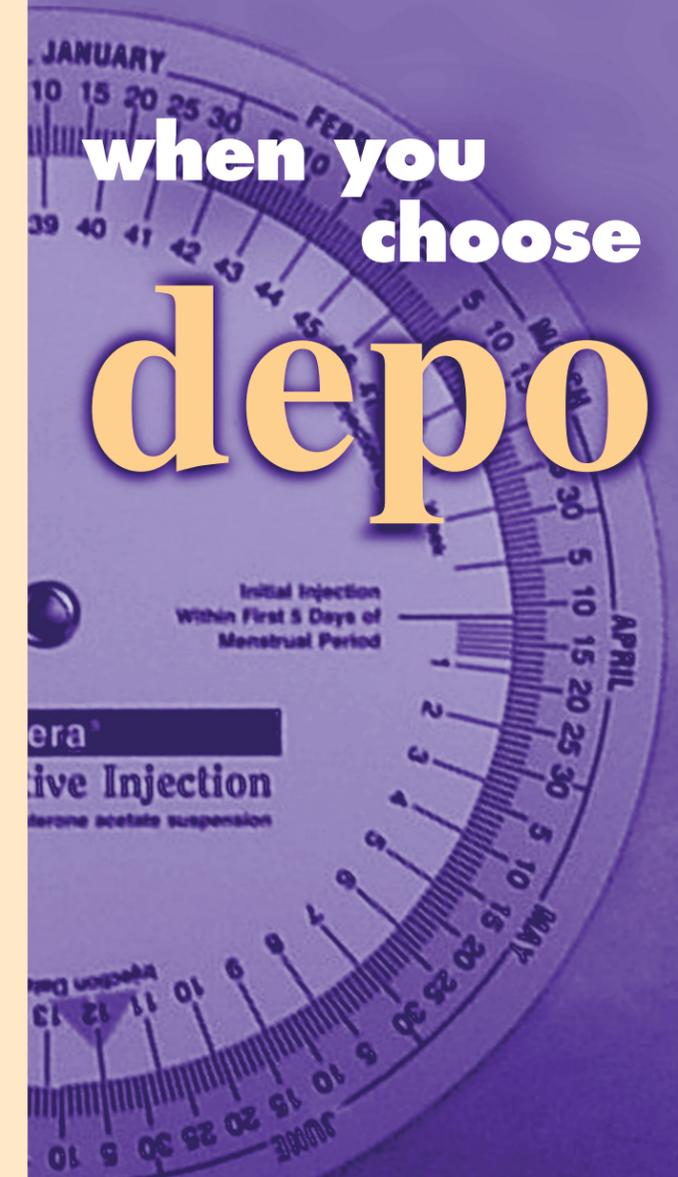
Public Health  
Seattle & King County 

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## Your Guide to Getting Started

when you  
choose  
**depo**



## What is it?

Depo is a short name for Depo Provera, a shot that you get 4 times a year (every 12 weeks) to prevent pregnancy. Because Depo is given by injection, many women also call it “the shot”. Depo contains a hormone that is normally present in a woman’s body.

**FACT: For over 30 years, millions of women around the world have used Depo-Provera.**

## Getting Started with Depo

To get the most positive, worry-free start with Depo, take some time to learn about “the shot”:

- You get the shot in your arm or buttock once every 12 weeks. Most women don’t find the shot painful.
- You get the shot from a trained health care provider, like a nurse or doctor. This means you need to make an appointment to get each shot.
- It’s very important to get your shots **on time** (every 12 weeks).
- To make an appointment, call your health provider or clinic **2 - 3** weeks before your next shot is due.
- If you know you won’t be able to come to your regular appointment time, you can get the shot up to two weeks early (at 10 weeks).
- If you get your first shot during the first 5 days of your period, you will have **immediate** protection against pregnancy. If you get your first shot at another time, you will need to use a back-up method, like **condoms**, for 7 days.

## What to Expect: Common Side Effects

You may experience side effects with Depo. Usually, these side effects will go away during your first 6 - 12 months on Depo, as your body gets used to it.

### Irregular Bleeding

During your first 6 - 12 months on Depo, you may have longer or heavier periods than you are used to, bleeding between your periods or no periods at all.

### Changes in Your Period

As you continue to use Depo, you will begin to notice that your periods come less often. Some women like this side effect. Others may feel worried when they don’t get their periods. Most women feel better when they know what changes to expect.

- **After 6 to 12 months:** Women sometimes skip a period or stop having their periods.
- **After 1 or more years:** 50% of women have no periods.
- **After 2 or more years:** Most women stop having their periods **completely**.
- **After stopping Depo:** Some women start their periods again immediately. For other women, it can take up to 1 year for their periods to begin again.

### Weight Gain

About 70% of women who use Depo do gain some weight—an average of 3 pounds in the first year and 5 - 7 pounds by the end of the second year. This is because Depo can make you feel more hungry, and also more tired. It’s important to remember that 20% of women **lose** weight on Depo, while 10% experience no change at all. If you are worried about weight gain on Depo, focus on making healthy food choices, and getting regular exercise.

## Less Common Side Effects

- mood changes (feeling irritable or moody)
- tiredness
- headache
- vaginal dryness
- decreased or increased sex drive
- hair loss

Because Depo is a long-lasting form of birth control (one shot every 12 weeks), side effects such as spotting or mood changes can’t be reversed right away. You usually have to wait until the shot wears off. If you feel that these side effects are becoming a problem for you, call your health provider or clinic.

## What to Do if You Have a Problem

Depo is a very safe method of birth control. Very rarely, a woman might have a negative reaction to it. Contact your health provider, clinic, or emergency room if you have any of the following:

- heavy bleeding from your vagina
- frequent, very painful headaches
- severe pain in your belly
- depression

**“I use the shot because I really don’t want to be pregnant right now, and I know it works. A friend told me that she got fat on the shot, but I haven’t gained weight at all.”**

**— Christina, age 24, office assistant, mother of one**

## Benefits of Being on Depo

For over 30 years, women around the world have used Depo to prevent pregnancy. Here are some of the reasons why women today choose Depo:

- Very effective (more effective than the Pill)
- Long-lasting — only needed 4 times a year
- After 6 - 12 months, lighter periods or no periods
- Less pain with periods
- No pills to take every day
- Private (nothing for anyone to find)
- Safe for women who cannot take estrogen (the hormone commonly found in birth control pills)

**FACT: Depo can offer protection against cancer of the lining of the womb and cancer of the ovaries.**

## Some Disadvantages: What You Should Know

While Depo continues to be a popular choice for many women, it isn’t the best fit for everyone. The list below will help you to understand why Depo may not be the best choice for some women:

- Depo does **not** protect you from HIV or other sexually transmitted infections (STDs). You need to use a condom if you think you need protection.
- You need to remember to go to your clinic or health provider every 12 weeks to get your shot.
- Because Depo is a long-lasting form of birth control, it is not the best method for women who want to get pregnant **in the next 18 months**.
- Women with osteoporosis (low bone density) or weak bones should **not** use Depo.