



Depo-Provera[®] Contraceptive Injection

What You Need to Know

Deployment Medication Information Sheets (DMIS) are provided by the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (USACHPPM). Written for soldiers and their families, they provide basic information on deployment medications. Each DMIS is written in laymen's terms and covers topics such as need for and use of the vaccine/medication, side effects, precautions, and drug interactions. The information in the sheets is intended as guidance only; consult your health care provider for more information

What is Depo-Provera[®]?

- Depo-Provera[®] Contraceptive Injection is used as a long-acting form of birth control for women. It works by preventing your ovaries from releasing eggs. It also thickens the mucus of the cervix, which prevents sperm from meeting the egg. It contains a synthetic drug that is similar to progesterone, a hormone normally produced by the ovaries.
- It is important to know that this medication does NOT protect against HIV infection (AIDS) or other sexually transmitted diseases.

How do I take Depo-Provera[®]?

- A doctor or nurse gives you the initial injection (“shots”) of Depo-Provera[®] sometime within the first 5 days of your monthly period. The shot is given in the hip or upper arm. The injection takes only a minute and usually is not painful but may sting. The contraceptive effects are immediate.
- You will need to go to your military treatment facility approximately every 12 weeks thereafter for re-injection. You may get your shot earlier than 12 weeks if you cannot keep your appointment at the scheduled time. However, shots should *not* be given more than one week late or you could become pregnant.

Are there any side effects?

- Most women who begin using Depo-Provera[®] Contraceptive Injection experience a disruption of their normal menstrual bleeding patterns. This may include irregular or unpredictable bleeding or spotting, or a heavier blood flow. If abnormal or severe bleeding does persist, then check with your health care provider.
- If you continue to use Depo-Provera[®] Contraceptive Injection, after approximately 9-12 months of shots, you may eventually quit having a menstrual cycle altogether. This is not harmful.
- Some women may gain weight while on this medication. This occurs most often with women who eat high fat diets and who do not exercise.
- Some women may also have headaches, nausea, dizziness, fatigue, depression, breast pain or abdominal discomfort.

- After you discontinue this medication, the length of time before conception becomes possible will vary between women. Most women will become pregnant 6-8 months after the last shot, but rarely it can take longer than a year.

Is there any reason I should not take this medication?

- If you are pregnant, think you are pregnant or are trying to conceive.
- If you have irregular vaginal bleeding that has not been evaluated by a doctor.
- If you have known or suspected cancer of the breast or reproductive organs (cervix, uterus or ovaries).
- If you have certain types of liver disease.
- If you have had a ‘blood clot’ in the vein in your leg (phlebitis) or a stroke.
- Before taking this medication tell your health care provider if you have epilepsy, a history of depression, or diabetes. Also tell your health care provider of all over-the-counter or prescription drugs you are taking

What if I’m pregnant or breast-feeding?

- This medication should not be given to a pregnant woman.
- Depo-Provera® may safely be used in women who are breast feeding, as long as it is started 6 weeks after delivery. If you are breast-feeding, this medication should not be given before the 6th week postpartum checkup.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

- It is important that you stay on your dosage schedule of every 12 weeks for maximum effectiveness of Depo-Provera® in preventing pregnancy. If more than 13 weeks has passed since the last injection, you should take a pregnancy test before receiving the next shot. Be sure to use a secondary method of birth control in the interim.

What does the military require?

- There is no specific military requirement. Many women, especially those who spend a lot of time in the field or deployed, choose to use Depo-Provera® because of the ease of use and makes field hygiene easier.

Where can I get more information?

- Discuss other risks and benefits with your health care provider or someone at your military treatment facility.
- Seek out your military treatment facility for additional information on this and related concerns.

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