

Information About PROGESTIN-ONLY BIRTH CONTROL SHOT (“THE SHOT”)

What are progestin-only shots?

Progestin-only birth control shots are usually called Depo-Provera or the shot. It is a birth control method given as a shot about every 12 weeks.

How do progestin-only shots work?

Like birth control pills, the shot works by releasing a female hormone in your body. The hormone, progestin, prevents pregnancy in the following ways:

It may:

- Keep the body from releasing an egg that could be fertilized by a man's sperm
- Cause changes in the cervical mucus making it more difficult for a man's sperm to enter the uterus (womb)

How well does progestin-only shots work?

Very well. The shot prevents pregnancy about 98 to 99 percent of the time for perfect users. This means that it works about as well as having your tubes tied, but it only lasts 12 weeks. If you do not get a new shot every 12 weeks, you can get pregnant.

Why are progestin-only shots a good choice of birth control for me?

The shot is safe and works very well. You do not have to remember to do anything when you have sex to prevent pregnancy. If you decide later that you want to have a baby, all you have to do is stop getting the shot.

What are the possible side effects of progestin-only birth control shots?

The most common side effect for women using the shot is irregular bleeding. It is more common in the first 6 to 12 months of use. You may bleed more or less when you have your period than you did before taking the shot, or you may not have a period at all.



Other side effects you may have include:

- Headaches
- Nervous feeling
- Nausea (feel sick to you stomach)
- Sore breasts
- Change in appetite
- Weight gain or loss
- Dizziness
- Hair loss or increased hair on the face or body

Most of the time, any changes you have do not last long.

After using the shot with progestin, there may be a delay in getting pregnant. On average it may take 10 months to get pregnant after your last shot. This is normal and does not affect your ability to get pregnant in the long run.

Will I have any problems if I use progestin-only shots for my birth control method?

The loss of calcium in your bones is of most concern if you are a teenager; have bone disease or a strong family history of osteoporosis (porous bones); have an eating disorder; use drugs that can lower the amount of calcium in bones (drugs for epilepsy or steroids); or drink a lot of alcohol or smoke a lot.

Smoking and using progestin-only shots increases the amount of calcium lost from your bones.

If you need a birth control method for more than 2 years, your doctor or nurse will talk with you and may ask you to switch to another type of birth control or ask you to have your bones tested for thinning. The health department does not provide this test.

When the birth control shot is stopped, the calcium in the bones begins to come back, but there may be life-long effects.

Every woman should take steps to have healthy bones. To do this, take in plenty of calcium and get plenty of exercise. You may want to take a pill with calcium and vitamin D to lower the amount of calcium lost from your bones.

Information about PROGESTIN-ONLY BIRTH CONTROL SHOT (“THE SHOT”), continued

You should not use progestin-only birth control shot if:

- You are pregnant or think you may be pregnant
- You have bleeding from your vagina and do not know why
- You have breast cancer
- You have liver disease
- You have ever had blood clots, heart attack or stroke

Are there warning signs I need to watch for?

- Very painful headaches
- Heavy bleeding
- Depression
- Very bad lower stomach pain (may be a sign of pregnancy)
- Pus, prolonged pain, or bleeding where the shot was given

What if I am late for my birth control shot?

If you are more than 1 week late for your shot, use a back-up method, such as condoms, as soon as you realize that you are going to be late.

Visit your doctor, nurse, or clinic as soon as possible. You will need to continue using your back-up method until you get your shot and for a week after the shot.

Changes in your menstrual period:

During the first year you get progestin-only birth control shots, you may have changes in your periods.

Changes you may notice in your period are:

- Your cycle may not be regular, or you may not have a period at all
- You may bleed more or less than you did before taking the shot
- You may have spotting or bleeding between periods

If you have a period that is very heavy or that does not stop at any time while you are using the shot, call your doctor, nurse, or clinic right away.

When you are on the shot, you may skip a period or not have a period at all. This is normal! It does mean that your ovaries are in a resting state and are not releasing an egg each month.

As long as you have not delayed or missed any of your shots, you are probably not pregnant, even if your periods stop.

However, if you think you may be pregnant, call the doctor, nurse, or clinic. When you stop taking the progestin-only shot, your period will come back. It will take a little time before this happens.

Can I breastfeed my baby if I use progestin-only shots for birth control?

Yes! Progestin-only methods are preferred if a hormonal method of birth control is used while breastfeeding.

Weight changes:

Users of progestin-only birth control methods may gain weight due to an increased appetite.

Pay close attention to what you eat and exercise regularly.

- Eat less
- Eat small, infrequent meals
- Exercise more
- Drink 8-10 glasses of water daily

Where can I get birth control shots?

You can get the shot, like Depo-Provera, at your local health department, a family planning clinic or a doctor's office.

If you are thinking about stopping the birth control shot!

Before you stop using the birth control shot, call your doctor or nurse to talk about it.

REMEMBER:

Birth control shots do not protect you against HIV or any other sexually transmitted infections. Use condoms to protect yourself each time you have sex.

If you have any questions, call us at:
