
All About the Birth Control Shot



The Birth Control Shot keeps you from getting pregnant for weeks at a time.

The Birth Control Shot (Depo-Provera) has a hormone in it that stops the woman's eggs from leaving her ovaries. It also thickens the mucus at the opening of her uterus. That way, the man's sperm cannot get inside.

The clinician gives the woman a shot every 12 weeks.

How does the Shot work?

Every 12 weeks, the woman goes to her health care provider to get a shot. The hormone in the shot keeps working for 12 weeks.

After that, it starts to wear off. You must get a shot every 12 weeks.

How well does the Shot work?

The shot is very good at keeping women from getting pregnant.

Only about 1 to 3 women out of 100 who use the shot for a year may get pregnant.

How is the Shot given?

A health care provider gives you the shot in your hip or arm. It should be given by the fifth day after your period starts.

You may feel sore for a few hours where the shot was given.



You must go to a health care provider to get your birth control shots.

What women like:

- The shot works very well to prevent pregnancy.
- It lasts for 12 weeks.
- There are no pills to take every day.
- You can use it without others knowing it.

What some women dislike:

- Your periods change.
 - You may have other side effects that won't go away until the shot wears off.
 - You have to go to a health care provider every 12 weeks to get another shot.
 - It may take a long time to get pregnant after you stop using it.
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What about the side effects of the Birth Control Shot?

At first, all women who use the shot have a change in their periods.

- You may not know when you will have your period.
- You may have spotting between periods.
- You may have longer or shorter periods.

After using the shot for 12 months, some women stop having periods.

There are other side effects that some women have with the shot:

- You may have sore breasts. This usually goes away after 2 months.
- It may make some women want to eat more. Some women may gain a few pounds each year. It can help to eat healthy foods and to stay active.
- Some women have headaches, or feel nervous, depressed, or dizzy. Others may have a higher or lower sex drive.

Some side effects may not go away until the shot wears off. That may take 3 or 4 months after your last shot.

If you have any problems, talk to your health care provider. There may be something that can be done to help. You may have to wait until the shot wears off to feel better. You may need to choose another kind of birth control.

Are there any other problems with using the Shot?

You may not be able to get pregnant right away after the last shot.

- Some women may be able to get pregnant as early as 4 months after the last shot.
- Others can take as long as 18 months.

Women who use the shot may have some bone loss. The longer you use the shot, the more bone loss there may be. After you stop using the shot, the bone may not build back up.

It's important to:

- Eat foods high in calcium, like yogurt and green leafy vegetables.
- Keep active. Get some kind of exercise at least 3 times a week.
- Quit smoking or never start!

If you are a teen, this is especially important to remember because you need to build up bone.

The Shot may not be safe for some women.

Talk to your provider about any health concerns you may have. For example:

- If you think you might be pregnant.
- If you have vaginal bleeding for no known reason.
- If you have ever had breast cancer or liver disease.
- If you have had blood clots in the legs or lungs.
- If you are allergic to it.

Tell your health care provider if you have had any serious health problems. These problems could include bad headaches, depression, or heart disease. Your provider will help you decide if the shot will be safe for you to use.

Watch for these warning signs.

Call a health care provider right away if you have any of these:

- Repeated, very painful headaches
- Sudden headaches
- Heavy bleeding
- Depression
- Sharp, sudden pain in the abdomen

These are signs of serious health problems that a few women may have while using the shot.

The Birth Control Shot does not protect you from HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) or other diseases you could get from having sex.

Use a new condom every time you have sex to help protect yourself from these diseases.