



OFFICE OF POPULATION AFFAIRS

# Birth Control Shot

## THE FACTS



# Birth Control Shot THE FACTS



## Quick Facts

### Effectiveness in Preventing Pregnancy:

- Of 100 women who use this method each year, about 6 may get pregnant.
- The risk is lower in women who get the shot on time.

### STI Protection:

- No

### Office Visit Required:

- Yes, only a health care provider can give a woman the birth control shot.

## What is the birth control shot?

The birth control shot is an injection of progestin, a hormone found in birth control pills. Hormones are chemicals that control how different parts of your body work. The shot prevents pregnancy by keeping the ovaries from releasing eggs. It also causes cervical mucus to thicken and the lining of the uterus to thin. This keeps sperm from reaching the egg.



The most commonly used injectable contraceptive is Depo-Provera, sometimes called Depo.

## How does it work?



Your healthcare provider needs to give you the birth control shot. Each shot lasts for at least 12 weeks (about three months). It is important to get each shot on time, otherwise you may get pregnant.

# Birth Control Shot THE FACTS



## How do I get it?

You can get the birth control shot at a clinic or your health care provider's office. To search for a family planning clinic near you, go to <http://www.hhs.gov/opa/>

Discuss your medical history with your health care provider before using the birth control shot and let them know if you develop any side effects.

## How effective is it?

Of 100 women who use this method each year, 6 may get pregnant. This includes women who did not get the shot on time.



## Advantages of the Birth Control Shot

- The shot is safe and works well in preventing pregnancy. Using the shot means you do not have to think about birth control when you want to have sex.
- Many women who use the birth control shot have lighter periods or no periods at all and fewer menstrual cramps.
- Women who take the shot are less likely to have cancer of the uterus and pelvic inflammatory disease (PID).
- Your male partner doesn't have to know about it or do anything different.



## Drawbacks of the Birth Control Shot



- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, and may increase the risk of getting an STI if condoms are not used with a partner who has an STI.
- Requires a visit to a health care provider every 12 weeks.
- It may take up to a year after stopping the shot to become pregnant, especially the longer the shot is used.
- Some women experience side effects such as breast tenderness, spotting or bleeding between periods, weight gain, nervousness, abdominal discomfort and/or headaches.
- Using the shot longer than two years continuously may cause some thinning of a woman's bones. However, normal bone growth returns when a woman stops taking the birth control shot.



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## Sources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- [Unintended Pregnancy Prevention: Contraception](#)

Food and Drug Administration

- [Birth Control: Medicines to Help You](#)

Office on Women's Health

- [Girlshealth.gov: Types of Birth Control](#)

*Reviewed: August 2014 | By: Association of Reproductive Health Professionals*

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