

## The Shot

### What is the shot?

The shot (Depo Provera™) is a long-acting injectable form of birth control to prevent pregnancy by using one hormone called progestin. The shot works by:

- stopping the release of an egg (ovulation),
- thickening the cervical fluid to keep sperm from reaching the egg, and
- changing the lining of the uterus.



### How effective is the shot?

- The shot is about 96% effective at preventing pregnancy when used correctly.
- Some medications including herbal supplements can interfere with hormonal birth control. Talk to your healthcare provider.

### Advantages

- Given once every 3 months
- Less period cramping
- Lighter periods or no periods at all
- Can be used by people who cannot take estrogen
- Safe to use when breastfeeding
- Convenient and discreet; you can use the shot without your partner(s), friends or family knowing
- Lowers the risk for some cancers (uterine, ovarian)

### Disadvantages

- Can have irregular periods during the first year
- Need to go to a clinic or pharmacy for a shot every 11-14 weeks
- Side effects from the shot may continue for 6 months or more after you stop using the shot
- There may be a delay in return to fertility once stop taking the shot
- Does not protect against sexually transmitted infections

### Side effects

Some people have side which usually go away a few weeks after starting the medication:

- Headaches
- Breast tenderness
- Mood changes
- Irregular periods
- Possible weight gain (usually less than 5% of current weight)

If you experience side effects and they bother you, go to a clinic or pharmacy to discuss ways to manage them.

### WARNING

#### Reasons to get urgent medical help:

- Heavy continuous periods
- Very bad headache
- Severe leg pain
- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Sudden change in seeing or speaking clearly
- Yellowing of your skin or eyes
- Severe pain, bleeding, or pus where you had your shot

Birth control is free for BC residents with MSP. For more information, check out the BC Pharmacare website.

### Where can you get the shot?

- The shot is available only by prescription and is free if you have MSP.
- Sexual health clinics, pharmacies or your health care provider can provide a prescription for you.
- Some clinics may offer the shot for low or no cost if you don't have MSP.

### The shot DOES NOT protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

*STI testing is recommended every 6-12 months and/or when you have a new partner(s).*

*STI testing is available at a sexual health clinic or with your health care provider.*

## How to use the shot

- You can get your FIRST shot at any time. You will need to use a back-up method of birth control such as condoms for the first 7 days.
- The shot can be given at a sexual health clinic, pharmacy, or by your health care provider. If you want to continue to use the shot for birth control, you must return for another shot in 11-14 weeks.

The shot is effective in preventing pregnancy after the first 7 days of receiving the shot. **Use condoms as back-up for the first seven days of use.**

Get enough calcium & vitamin D in your diet or supplements to keep bones strong

## Calcium & the shot

The shot can cause you to lose calcium from your bones. Bones return to normal when you stop using the shot. People on the shot need to get enough calcium and vitamin D in their diet or take a supplement to keep bones strong. Regular exercise will help protect your bones as well. Talk to your health care provider if you have concerns.

## What if you are late for your shot?

### If it is less than 15 weeks since your last injection

- Get your shot as soon as possible.
- You will still be protected from pregnancy as long as you receive the dose before 15 weeks.

### If it is more than 15 weeks since your last injection

- Get your shot as soon as possible.
- You may not be protected from pregnancy.
- Use a back up method (e.g. condoms), or do not have sex until 7 days after your shot.
- Consider using emergency contraception if you had sex without a condom in the last 5-7 days.

Check out “*Stay on Schedule: Your guide to taking contraception after a missed or late dose*” at [www.sexandu.ca/sos/](http://www.sexandu.ca/sos/)

## Pregnancy may occur if birth control is not used properly.

- Consider Emergency Contraception if you have sex within the first 7 days after your first shot and DID NOT use a condom.
- The Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP) can be taken as soon as possible after unprotected sex (within 5 days, but the sooner the better).
- An IUD can also be used as an option of Emergency Contraception up to 7 days after unprotected sex with an effectiveness of 99%.
- Call a sexual health clinic, pharmacy, or 1-800-SEX-SENSE for more information.

## Questions?

If you have questions about your birth control, do not stop taking it. Call your health care provider, sexual health clinic, or 1-800-SEX-SENSE.

## Find the clinic closest to you:

<https://www.vch.ca/en/service/sexual-health-clinics>

[www.optionsforsexualhealth.org](http://www.optionsforsexualhealth.org)



This fact sheet contains general information and should not be used in place of individual consultation with a qualified healthcare provider.

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