

# Contraceptive Injection (Depo)

## What is Depo?

Depo is the common name for the hormonal contraceptive injection *Medroxyprogesterone acetate*.

Depo contains a progestogen which is similar to the hormone progesterone, which is naturally produced by the ovaries.

Depo is injected into a muscle, usually into your arm, every 12 weeks & is slowly absorbed into the bloodstream to prevent pregnancy.

There are two brands of Depo available in Australia: *Depo-Provera* and *Depo-Ralovera*.

## How does Depo work?

- Prevents ovulation (egg release from the ovaries), and
- Thickens the mucus of the cervix so that the sperm cannot enter the uterus (womb).

Depo may take up to seven days to start working. If you are late having the injection, the effectiveness of Depo in preventing pregnancy is reduced.

## How do I get Depo?

### Step 1

Visit a doctor. Starting Depo for the first time requires an assessment by a doctor and getting a prescription (script).

### Step 2

If you and your doctor decide that Depo is right for you, you will be given a prescription (script) for Depo which you will need to fill at the chemist/pharmacy.

### Step 3

Return to the doctor to have the injection, and return every three months.

## How effective is Depo?

Depo is **96-99.8% effective**. You just need one injection every 12 weeks, which can be done at your nearest Family Planning Tasmania clinic.

## How do I get started?

Visit our website to book an appointment with our friendly clinicians to see if Depo is right for you.



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## Advantages of Depo

- 96-99.8% effective at preventing pregnancy.
- Cost-effective and long acting (up to 12 weeks).
- Most users will have no periods or very light bleeding during their periods.
- Period pain & discomfort may be reduced.
- Can be used while breastfeeding.
- An option for those who cannot have the hormone oestrogen.

## Disadvantages

- If you are late getting your injection, it may not work.
- If side effects occur, they may take up to three months to wear off.
- There could be a delay in return to normal fertility for you. On average, the delay is about eight months from the last Depo injection but this can be up to 18 months in some people.

## Possible side effects

- Periods can stop completely in 50% to 60% of users. This is completely safe.
- Irregular or spot bleeding.
- Prolonged bleeding, which usually improves with time.
- Heavy bleeding.
- Headaches.
- Skin changes.
- Bloating.
- Tender breasts.
- Mood changes.
- Around 20% of user will gain some weight.

There are medications that may help with prolonged/heavy bleeding. Please speak to a doctor about this.

## What else do I need to know?

- A pregnancy test is usually carried out during the initial assessment.
- The first injection is usually given during the first five days of your menstrual period. This is to ensure that you are not pregnant. However, Depo can be started at any time during your cycle.
- In some cases, it is necessary to use condoms for seven days after the injection.
- Your doctor will review your risks for loss of bone density while you are using Depo.
- Follow-up injections are given every 12 weeks to continue protection against pregnancy. To renew your script, you will need to be reviewed by a doctor every six months.
- Depo does not protect you against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or blood borne viruses.

## Is Depo right for me?

Depo is suitable for many people. However, you may not be able to have a Depo injection if you have:

- Liver disease
- Difficulty with intramuscular injections
- Cardiovascular disease
- Plans to become pregnant within 6-12 months
- Diabetes
- Difficulty in tolerating changes in your periods
- Depression
- An allergy to Depo
- Breast cancer & some other forms of cancer
- Low bone density
- Diabetes.

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