Depo-Provera®

What is Depo-Provera®?
Depo-Provera® is a birth control medication that uses a female hormone to prevent pregnancy. To do this, the hormone prevents the release of eggs from the ovaries, thickens cervical mucus, and thins the lining of blood in the uterus (womb).

How is the medication given?
The medication is injected (a shot) into the muscle of a girl's arm or leg about every 11 weeks. Girls do not commonly complain of pain with their injections.

How effective is Depo-Provera®?
Depo-Provera® is 99% effective in preventing pregnancy during the 11 weeks after an injection. The only 100% effective method of birth control is abstinence (not having sexual intercourse).

Why is Depo-Provera® popular among teens that use birth control?
Depo-Provera® has been a popular birth control method for many years because it is effective and so easy to use. There are no pills to forget or prescriptions to pick up at the pharmacy each month.

Are there side effects?
Yes. Girls using Depo-Provera® will very likely have a change in their menstrual cycle. They may experience more bleeding, less bleeding, irregular or unpredictable bleeding, spotting, or any combination of these. After using Depo-Provera® for a year, most (but not all) girls will have only an occasional period or no periods at all.

Another common side effect of Depo-Provera® use is increased appetite. If they are not careful about what they choose to eat, girls may gain weight while using Depo-Provera®.

Less common side effects are nausea, headaches, mood changes, skin changes, and hair loss.

Another possible side effect of Depo-Provera® may be an effect on bone density. Bone density describes the strength of bones. The teen years are one of the most important times in life for developing bone density. The more dense bones are, the stronger they are. If teens develop good bone density, they may have fewer bone problems when they are older adults. There is concern that using Depo-Provera® during the teen years may prevent a girl from reaching her maximum (strongest) bone density. Although no one knows for sure, this perhaps can contribute to poor bone health later in life. There is evidence that bones do recover at least some of the lost density when Depo-Provera® use is stopped. Currently, because of its potential effect on bone health, it is not recommended that Depo-Provera® be used for more than a total of two years if other satisfactory methods of birth control are available.
Will using Depo-Provera® affect my ability to have children later?

No. The likelihood of getting pregnant after using Depo-Provera® will be the same as it was before a girl started getting the shots. Menstrual cycles during this time may be very unpredictable. It may take several months for regular cycles to start again.

However, it is still possible to get pregnant even if periods are not regular or a girl is not having periods.

Does Depo-Provera® protect against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)?

No. Even if they are using Depo-Provera®, all sexually active teens are encouraged to use condoms with all intercourse to help prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

How does someone get started on Depo-Provera®?

If you are interested in using Depo-Provera®, talk to your health care provider. Make sure Depo-Provera® is right for you. A pregnancy test will be done. After you decide to use Depo-Provera®, the first injection is usually given during a menstrual period. Shots are then scheduled about every 11 weeks.

For more information, call your health care provider or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188.

Remember: Depo-Provera® does not protect you from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or HIV/AIDS. If you decide that you are going to have sex, it is important that you use a condom every time to prevent the spread of disease.