

Patient Name (Please Print): _____

Birth Control Shot FACT SHEET

The birth control shot is given once every 12 weeks. This injection contains a progestin hormone, depot medroxyprogesterone acetate (DMPA), which is similar to hormones made naturally by the body.

The shot prevents pregnancy by stopping an egg from being released from the ovary. It also changes the cervical mucus to prevent sperm from reaching an egg.

You must receive an injection once every 12 weeks. If you receive your injections on time, the birth control shot is a very effective at preventing pregnancy. For the typical women using the shot, it is 94% effective at preventing pregnancy.

The birth control shot does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Condoms are the best way for sexually active people to reduce the risk of infection. Always use a condom if you or your partner has other sex partners.

Advantages of the birth control shot:

- Lasts for 12-weeks at a time
- Lighter menstrual periods – for some women, menstrual periods may stop completely
- Decreased pain with menstrual periods
- Nothing to do right before sex (to prevent pregnancy)
- May improve PMS (premenstrual syndrome) symptoms
- Can decrease risk of uterine (endometrial) and ovarian cancer
- Can use immediately after giving birth and when breastfeeding
- For women with epilepsy, the shot may decrease the number of seizures
- For women with sickle cell disease, the shot may decrease the number of sickle crises

Disadvantages of the birth control shot:

- Must return to clinic every 11-12 weeks for an injection
- Less effective (higher risk of pregnancy) if you are late for receiving your injection
- Likely to have irregular menstrual bleeding or spotting, especially within the first 3-6 months of using the shot. This usually improves over time.
- Side effects – the shot is generally well-tolerated, but some women experience side effects such as weight gain, breast tenderness, or change in mood.
- It is not possible to discontinue the medicine immediately. You may have continued effects (or side effects) from the medicine for several weeks to months after the last injection
- Some women may have a delay in getting pregnant after stopping the shot. Most women are fertile (able to get pregnant) within 12 months of stopping the birth control shot.

Risks of using the birth control shot

- **Decreased bone density** – the shot may cause a drop in bone mineral density (bone strength), particularly in young women (age 20 or younger) or women who use the shot for more than 10 years. However, this decrease improves after stopping the shot, and there is no evidence that this change will result in more fractures (broken bones).

- **Allergic reaction** – rarely, women can have an allergic reaction to the shot. Very rarely, this reaction can be severe or life-threatening.
- **Change in weight** – Some women using the shot gain weight. The medicine in the shot does not cause you to gain weight, but may make some women feel more hungry than usual. On average, women gain 5-6 pounds in the first year on the shot, but occasionally women experience a larger change in weight.

Contraindications – the birth control shot can not be used by women who:

- Have a history of breast cancer

Tell your clinician if you have any of these risk factors or conditions, or of any other past or current medical problems or concerns. Your clinician will evaluate your history to help you decide if the shot is the correct choice for you.

Warning signs – Call your health care provider right away if you:

- Think you are pregnant
- Have been, or might have been, exposed to an STI
- Have new or worsening headaches
- Have depression or change in mood

Regular physical examinations for routine health care, STI and cancer screening are strongly recommended.

Patient Signature: _____ Date: _____

Clinician Signature: _____ Date: _____