

# Depot Medroxyprogesterone Acetate (Depo Provera®)

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This sheet is about exposure to depot medroxyprogesterone acetate in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information is based on available published literature. It should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare provider.

## ***What is depot medroxyprogesterone acetate?***

Depot medroxyprogesterone acetate is the injectable (given by shot) form of a lab-made hormone called medroxyprogesterone acetate. It has been used to prevent pregnancy (as birth control). Depot medroxyprogesterone acetate can also be used to treat some problems linked to a person's period (menstrual disorders) and, at high doses, can be used to treat certain types of cancer. This fact sheet will cover the use of the depot medroxyprogesterone acetate shot for birth control. Depot medroxyprogesterone acetate is not the same as oral birth control pills (pills taken by mouth), which contain other hormones. Depot medroxyprogesterone acetate is sold under the brand name Depo Provera®.

## ***I am taking depot medroxyprogesterone acetate, but I would like to stop taking it before getting pregnant. How long does the drug stay in my body?***

People eliminate medication at different rates. In healthy adults, it takes 120 to 200 days, on average, for most of the depot medroxyprogesterone acetate to be gone from the body.

## ***I take depot medroxyprogesterone acetate. Can it make it harder for me to get pregnant?***

Depot medroxyprogesterone acetate is a form of birth control and is expected to lower the chance of getting pregnant. After stopping depot medroxyprogesterone acetate, fertility may take time to come back, but is expected to return for most people.

## ***Does taking depot medroxyprogesterone acetate increase the chance of miscarriage?***

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. Use of depot medroxyprogesterone acetate is not expected to increase the chance of miscarriage.

## ***Does taking depot medroxyprogesterone acetate increase the chance of birth defects?***

Every pregnancy starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a birth defect. This is called the background risk. The majority of studies have not found a higher chance of birth defects with exposure to depot medroxyprogesterone acetate.

## ***Does taking depot medroxyprogesterone acetate in pregnancy increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems?***

Studies have not been done to see if depot medroxyprogesterone acetate increases the chance for pregnancy-related problems such as preterm delivery (birth before week 37). Two studies reported a link to low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500 grams] at birth), while another study did not.

## ***Does taking depot medroxyprogesterone acetate in pregnancy affect future behavior or learning for the child?***

Studies have not been done to see if depot medroxyprogesterone acetate can cause behavior or learning issues for the child.

## ***Breastfeeding while taking depot medroxyprogesterone acetate:***

Depot medroxyprogesterone acetate gets into breast milk in small amounts and is not expected to negatively affect a child's long-term growth and development. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), use of depot medroxyprogesterone while breastfeeding is usually not recommended less than 6 weeks after the baby's birth. But

the benefit of using the medication and breastfeeding your baby may outweigh possible risks. Your healthcare providers can talk with you about using depot medroxyprogesterone acetate and what medication is best for you. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

***If a male takes depot medroxyprogesterone acetate, could it affect fertility or increase the chance of birth defects?***

Studies have not been done to see if depot medroxyprogesterone acetate could affect male fertility (ability to get partner pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects above the background risk. In general, exposures that fathers or sperm donors have are unlikely to increase risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet Paternal Exposures at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/>.

**Please click [here](#) for references.**

**Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at [MotherToBaby.org](https://mothertobaby.org).**

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