

Depo Provera ranked most effective contraceptive

Use of the contraceptive requires a progesterone injection every 12 weeks

By Megan Turner
Higher Education Reporter

According to a 1997 survey administered by the Student Health Center, less than 15 percent of female students choose Depo Provera when selecting a contraceptive. Even though the numbers are low at the University, users of Depo Provera nationwide reach into the hundreds of thousands because of its effectiveness, convenience and the absence of severe side-effects.

What is Depo Provera?

In the female body, there are two hormones that control the reproductive system: estrogen and

progesterone, said Colleen Jones, nurse practitioner for the Women's Health Clinic. Depo Provera is a synthetic progesterone compound that is injected into the arm or buttocks every 12 weeks. It was developed in Europe in 1960 and used widely there. Not until 1992 did it become an approved birth control method in the United States.

Essentially, Depo Provera prevents ovulation by inhibiting the release of the ovum (egg). In addition, the contraceptive also

causes thickening of cervical mucus, thus preventing sperm from entering the uterus.

How effective is it?

"If you hate shots, this is obviously not a great method, unless you can stand it for about 5 minutes every three months."

Provera is one of the most effective forms of contraception at 99 percent. The reason it is not 100 percent effective is due to human error, especially if the user forgets to come in to receive a shot, Jones said. The shot must be giv-

en within the first five days after the beginning of menstruation in order for it to be effective; otherwise, pregnancy may occur.

What are the side-effects?

With every form of hormone-based contraceptives, there are usually some side-effects. Because Depo Provera is not an estrogen-based drug, side-effects such as nausea are not present. However, what Jones calls "nuisance side-effects" do exist.

The most obvious side-effect is "spotting," or irregular menstrual bleeding. For the first three or four shots, bleeding can occur at random intervals and for extended periods of time; however, the bleeding is significantly lighter than normal menstruation and is not associated with cramping, Jones said. Usually, after a year of

treatment, the absence of menstruation can also be a side-effect. Acne, mood changes and weight gain of five pounds or less can also occur, but are not as prominent as they are with the Pill.

What are the advantages?

Advantages include a slim chance of human error. Condoms can break, pills can be forgotten, and a person can fail to insert her diaphragm properly. Also, because Depo Provera is not related to each time a person has sexual intercourse or a daily routine, it is very convenient. Plus, Depo Provera is fairly inexpensive, at least at the health center where it runs about \$30 per shot. The Pill, for instance, costs roughly \$9 a month.

What are the disadvantages?

If you hate shots, this is obviously not a great method, unless you can stand it for about 5 minutes every three months. Also, Depo Provera does not prevent sexually-transmitted diseases. Menstrual spotting can also be an annoyance and is the reason why many students decide to stop taking Depo Provera, Jones said.

Where do I get Depo?

Depo Provera is offered at the Women's Health Clinic on the second floor of the health center. An injection clinic will be held every Monday from 1:30 to 4 pm for those who have questions or are interested in receiving an injection. Jones said an appointment can also be made if a person is unavailable Mondays. For more information call 346-4449.

The details on Depo Provera

- Depo is a contraceptive that is injected into the buttocks or arm every 12 weeks.
- It is 99 percent effective.
- It is inexpensive: \$30 per injection at the Student Health Center.
- Side-effects include light, irregular menstrual flow for the first three to four shots and possibly an absence of menstruation thereafter.
- It does not protect a user from sexually-transmitted diseases.
- It is easy to get: Contact the Women's Health Clinic at 346-4449.

The effectiveness of contraceptives in comparison to Depo

- **DEPO PROVERA:** 99 percent effective, depending on if the user remembers to get the shot or not.
- **THE PILL:** 97-99 percent effective, depending on if the user remembers to take the Pill daily.
- **CONDOMS:** 77-97 percent effective, depending on if used properly, if used with spermicide and if it does not break.
- **INTRAUTERINE DEVICES:** 95 percent effective, depending on if there are leaks in the device.
- **DIAPHRAGM:** 97 percent effective, depending on if used with spermicide and if used properly.
- **THE WITHDRAWAL METHOD:** Method: 81-96 percent effective, depending on time of withdrawal.

source: www.ppfa.org/ppfa/contraception/choices_main.html



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