



## CONTRACEPTION

**DMPA** – Depo medroxyprogesterone acetate (Depo Provera®, Depo Ralovera®)

### What is DMPA?

It is a hormonal contraceptive given by injection every three months.

**DMPA** contains a progestogen. This is similar to the hormone progesterone, which is naturally produced by the female body. **DMPA** is given by injection into a muscle every 12 weeks and is slowly absorbed into the blood stream to prevent pregnancy. Depo-Provera® and Depo-Ralovera® are the brand names of DMPA available in Australia.

### DMPA works by:

- preventing ovulation (egg release from the ovary)
- thickening the mucus of the cervix so that sperm cannot enter the uterus (womb)
- changing the lining of the uterus, making it unsuitable for pregnancy.

### How effective is DMPA?

**DMPA** is up to **99% effective**. This means that of 100 women using DMPA consistently over a year, it is possible that 1 woman may become pregnant.

What are the advantages of **DMPA** as a method of contraception?

It is:

- highly effective
- long acting
- does not require daily pill taking
- inexpensive.

### What are the disadvantages of DMPA as a method of contraception?

- It is not possible to reverse the effects of an injection once it is given.
- If side effects occur they may last up to 3 months.
- There could be a delay in return to fertility. On average, the delay is about 9 months from the last **DMPA** injection being given.

Studies have shown that more than 80% of women trying to conceive were pregnant within 1 year of stopping **DMPA**

Within 2 years, 90% were pregnant.

This compares with women who have *not* used **DMPA**, where 90% are pregnant within 1 year.

### What are the possible health benefits of DMPA?

- Many women will have no periods or minimal bleeding only, with reduced discomfort or pain
- It reduces the chance of iron deficiency anaemia, endometriosis and cancer of the uterus.
- It reduces premenstrual symptoms (PMS)

### What are the possible side effects or complications of DMPA?

All women will experience changes in bleeding patterns including:

- periods mostly stop completely after the first or second injections
- irregular or spot bleeding
- prolonged bleeding (this is usually light, but can cause inconvenience to women)
- heavy bleeding (occasionally requiring treatment).

Other side effects

- small weight gain in some women
- headaches
- acne
- change in libido (sexual desire)
- mood changes

### DMPA MAY NOT BE SUITABLE for women who have:

- liver disease
- cardiovascular disease
- diabetes
- depression
- not reached their adult bone mass (under 25 years of age)
- difficulty with intra muscular injections
- plans to become pregnant within 6-12 months
- difficulty in tolerating changes in their periods (refer to possible side effects)

## DMPA is NOT SUITABLE for women who have:

- an allergy to **DMPA**
- breast cancer
- some other forms of cancer
- low bone density.

## What do I need to know about starting DMPA?

Starting DMPA for the first time requires an assessment by a doctor and getting a prescription.

The doctor will assess your medical history and suitability for this method. She/he will ensure that arrangements for the first injection are made at the right time of your menstrual cycle. You will be able to ask any questions that you may have about DMPA so you can be sure that it is the most suitable method for you.

The first injection of DMPA is usually given during the first five days of the menstrual period. This is to ensure the woman is not pregnant. In some cases it will be necessary to use condoms for seven days after the first injection. It is very important to make sure that there is no chance of you being pregnant at the time of injection. The injection may delay the diagnosis of pregnancy.

## What do I need to know about the ongoing use of DMPA?

Follow-up **DMPA** injections are given every **12 weeks** to continue protection against pregnancy. To renew your **DMPA** prescription you will need to see a doctor for review at least once a year.

Review of risks for loss of bone density (osteoporosis) should take place regularly while using **DMPA**, particularly for younger women and women approaching the menopause if they use this method for more than 2 years.

## Where is DMPA available?

**DMPA** is available on prescription and can be obtained from Family Planning Tasmania (FPT) clinics or your general practitioner (GP).

### Disclaimer:

FPT has taken every responsibility to ensure that the information contained in this fact sheet is up-to-date and accurate. As information and knowledge constantly changes, readers are advised to confirm that the information contained complies with present research, legislation and policy guidelines. FPT accepts no responsibility for difficulties that may arise as a result of an individual acting on advice and recommendations

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