

# Contraceptive injections

---

Contraceptive injections contain a progestogen hormone which is similar to the natural progesterone produced by the ovaries.

There are three types of injection. Depo-Provera and Sayana Press protect you from pregnancy for 13 weeks. Noristerat protects you for eight weeks; it's not commonly used in the UK.

The injection is a method of long-acting reversible contraception (LARC). LARC is very effective because while it's being used you don't have to remember to take or use contraception.

## Effectiveness

- Perfect use: If the injection is **always** used according to instructions it's over 99% effective. This means that less than one injection user in 100 will get pregnant in one year.
- Typical use: If the injection is **not always** used according to instructions, about six in 100 injection users will get pregnant in one year.

It's important to have your next injection at the right time. If you miss, or are late, having the next injection you may no longer be protected against pregnancy.

## Who can use it?

- Most women can have a contraceptive injection.
- It may not be suitable if you have, or have had in the past, certain illnesses or conditions such as breast cancer, serious heart disease or stroke, severe liver disease or risk factors for osteoporosis (thinning of the bones).
- A doctor or nurse will ask about your own and your family's medical history.

**After having a baby:** Can be started any time after you give birth. When using the injection within six weeks of giving birth you may be more likely to have heavy and irregular bleeding. The injection can be used if you're breastfeeding.

## How it works

- Releases the hormone progestogen which stops ovulation (releasing an egg).
- Also thickens cervical mucus so it's difficult for sperm to reach an egg, and thins the lining of the uterus (womb) so a fertilised egg is less likely to implant.

## Advantages

- Lasts for 13 weeks (Depo-Provera and Sayana Press) or eight weeks (Noristerat).
- It may reduce heavy painful periods and help with premenstrual symptoms for

some people.

- You can use it if you're breastfeeding.
- You don't have to think about contraception for as long as the injection lasts.

## **Disadvantages**

- Your periods may change in a way that isn't acceptable to you.
- Irregular bleeding may continue for some months after you stop the injections.
- Some people gain weight.
- Some people experience side effects such as spotty skin, hair loss, decreased libido, mood swings and headaches.

## **Risks**

- Depo-Provera or Sayana Press may cause thinning of the bones. This may be a problem if you already have risk factors for osteoporosis.
- Research suggests that people who use hormonal contraception, such as the injection, may have a small increase in the risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer compared to those who don't use hormonal contraception.
- You can have an allergic reaction to the injection but this is rare.
- There's a small risk of a reaction at the spot the injection is given, which may cause irritation, swelling or a scar.

## **Periods and fertility**

- Most often, periods will stop completely.
- Periods may be irregular, last longer or be heavier.
- There can be a delay of up to one year before the return of your periods and fertility after stopping the injection.

## **Other things to know about the contraceptive injection**

- It can't be removed from the body so any side effects may continue for as long as it works and for some time afterwards.
- Not affected by other medicines, diarrhoea or vomiting.
- If you're under 18 years old you may use Depo-Provera or Sayana Press, but only after careful evaluation by a doctor or nurse. This is because young people under 18 are still making bone.
- It's possible for you to be taught how to inject Sayana Press yourself at home but not all clinics and general practices currently offer this option.

For more information about injections go to [www.fpa.org.uk/contraceptiveinjections](http://www.fpa.org.uk/contraceptiveinjections)

**All methods of contraception come with a Patient Information Leaflet which provides detailed information about the method.**

This is general information based on evidence-guided research from the World Health Organisation and The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare of the Royal

College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and National Institute of Health and Care Excellence guidance.

Remember - contact your doctor, practice nurse or a sexual health clinic if you're worried or unsure about anything.

## General information

- Get information about contraception and sexual health at [www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk)
- Get information for young people under 25 at [www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk)
- Find your closest contraception or sexual health clinic at [www.fpa.org.uk/clinics](http://www.fpa.org.uk/clinics)
- Find a GP or pharmacy at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) (England), [www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk) (Wales), [www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot) (Scotland) and [www.hscni.net](http://www.hscni.net) (Northern Ireland).

## Emergency contraception

If you've had sex without contraception, or think your method might have failed, there are different types of emergency contraception you can use.

- An IUD is the most effective option. It can be fitted up to five days after sex, or up to five days after the earliest time you could have released an egg (ovulation).
- An emergency contraceptive pill with the active ingredient ulipristal acetate can be taken up to five days (120 hours) after sex. Available with a prescription or to buy from a pharmacy. ellaOne is the only brand in the UK.
- An emergency contraceptive pill with the hormone levonorgestrel can be taken up to three days (72 hours) after sex. More effective the earlier it is taken after sex. Available with a prescription or to buy from a pharmacy. There are different brands.

Emergency pills are available for free from some pharmacies. Age restrictions may apply..

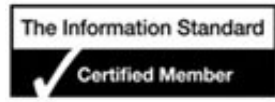
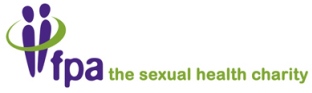
## Sexually transmitted infections

- Most methods of contraception don't protect you from sexually transmitted infections.
- Condoms (male/external and female/internal), when used correctly and consistently, can help protect against sexually transmitted infections. If you can, avoid using spermicidally lubricated condoms. The spermicide commonly contains a chemical called Nonoxinol 9, which may increase the risk of HIV infection.

**INFORMATION LAST UPDATED JUNE 2017. NEXT PLANNED REVIEW BY JUNE 2020.**

Get more information about contraceptive injections at [www.fpa.org.uk/contraceptiveinjections](http://www.fpa.org.uk/contraceptiveinjections)

© Family Planning Association - Contraceptive injections



The Family Planning Association is a registered charity, number 250187, and a limited liability company registered in England, number 887632. FPA, 23-28 Penn Street, London N1 5DL.