

Tips for engaging media



Photo: PATH/Will Boase

Tips for engaging traditional and social media for advocacy on DMPA-SC

How to use this tool: This tool presents general guidelines for leveraging traditional and social media to achieve your advocacy goals—including guidance on when this is appropriate, tips for how to do it, and examples of messages you can use. It is important to keep in mind that media approaches and social media use vary from country to country, and you should confirm the norms in your setting.

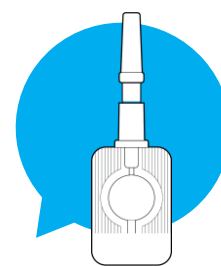
Traditional media

Whether newspapers, radio, television, or web-based outlets, in many settings, the media are significant influencers of public discussion. That is why media engagement can be an effective tool for advocacy. You can engage the media to inform policymakers and health decision-makers about the potential for new products, like easy-to-use injectable subcutaneous DMPA (DMPA-SC; brand name, Sayana[®] Press),* to expand contraceptive access and increase choice. The media can also help you inform women about contraception and encourage them to speak out about the need for greater access to a broad range of high-quality methods.

When and why to engage the media

Before engaging the media, you should consider carefully what your goal is, what messages you want to communicate, and how to clearly articulate your messages. You should be prepared to answer tough questions, and

* DMPA stands for depot medroxyprogesterone acetate. Sayana Press is a registered trademark of Pfizer Inc.



Quick facts about DMPA-SC

- ✓ **99% effective** at preventing unintended pregnancy when given correctly and on time every three months. Does not protect from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.
 - ✓ **Prefilled and ready to inject.**
 - ✓ **Easy to use**, including by community health workers and women themselves (self-injection).
 - ✓ **Small and light**, with a **short needle.**
 - ✓ **Stable at room temperature** (15°C–30°C).
 - ✓ **Three-year shelf life.**
 - ✓ **Registered in more than 80 countries, with approval for self-injection in more than 55 countries**, including countries across sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and Latin America, several European countries, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
 - ✓ **Can be purchased at US\$0.85 per dose** in the standard 200-pack presentation by qualified buyers* (including ministries of health in low-income countries).
- * For more information on qualified buyers and eligible countries, please contact FPoptions@path.org.

you should assess whether decision-makers would react positively or negatively to the issue being raised in such a public forum.

Just like any communications activity, you should always approach media engagement with a specific objective in mind. In general, we engage the media to:

- **Educate:** This could include raising awareness of a health problem, such as unmet need for contraception, or of the solution, such as the availability of new contraceptive options that may better meet women's needs.
- **Motivate:** Often we use the media to call decision-makers to act by drawing public attention to a problem that is within their control to address. This is most effective if you can outline both the problem and the solution and then make a specific request, or call to action, to decision-makers. This request might relate to approving policies or mobilizing resources to expand access to contraception.

How to engage the media

There are a variety of ways to engage the media. Here are a few of the most common:

- **Announce news:** If you have something newsworthy to announce, such as a new report or a new government policy that you have supported, this can be a great opportunity to engage the media. In many settings, this is done through a press release. A press release is a short, compelling news story that your organization prepares and sends, generally to a targeted but wide group of media representatives with hopes of encouraging them to contact your organization for an interview and/or write about the topic based on the press release. Press releases typically follow a standard format that is respected by editors and journalists; however, this format can vary by local norms. Be sure your release is engaging and timely, has a catchy title, is relevant to the media outlets you are targeting (and their audiences), and the format aligns with local standards.
- **Invite media to attend an event:** Whether it is a report launch, a high-level dialogue, or a community rally, an event can be an effective way to engage media. Be sure to have a designated spokesperson to talk with media at the event. You should also have written materials available to provide background information—this will help ensure that journalists report accurately on the topic. Remember that journalists may be unfamiliar with your topic and often need to produce their story quickly, so any information you can provide can make their job easier.
- **Offer a written piece:** You can also write an article and invite a media outlet to publish it. Submitted articles generally include:
 - An opinion editorial (op-ed)—a short article with a very specific point of view or call to action.
 - A letter to the editor—an even shorter piece, often written in response to an article published by the outlet.

Be sure to research the guidelines of your target outlet before writing, and think carefully about the message and the messenger. Your chance of being published may increase if you have a high-profile author.

Examples of media engagement on DMPA-SC

Press release:

[Injectable contraceptive launched in Burkina Faso to expand choice and address unmet need](#)

Op-ed: [Self-injection: A revolution in family planning](#)

Helpful hint:

To help you communicate effectively and accurately with the media, see “Messaging points on DMPA-SC” within this Advocacy Pack.

Tips for success

- **Remember your goal:** Members of the media will have their own objectives, but you should stick to yours. In interviews, always go back to the top two or three messages you want to communicate, and do not be tempted to get off-topic or comment on topics you are not sure about. Do not be afraid to say, “I don’t know” or “I will have to get back to you on that.”
- **Make sure your messages are simple, relevant, and timely:** The media are generally not experts on your topic. Use simple language. Make sure the information you are sharing is timely—for example, an event that just happened. Ensure it is relevant to the target outlet or reporter. Remember, stories about people are always more effective—bring your issue to life by sharing a story of someone who has been impacted by the health issue in some way.
- **Know your outlets and be strategic:** Do not reach out blindly to every media outlet. Read, watch, or listen to potential outlets before reaching out. Take note of what topics specific outlets tend to cover and which reporters generally cover which topics. Being aware of this context will help you target the information most effectively.
- **Practice, practice, practice:** Speaking with the media requires practice. You should always take time to prepare your key messages or talking points and practice saying them. If you have time, role play with a colleague and have them ask you tough questions so you can practice responding. Even if you do not anticipate any tough questions, it will help you feel more confident in an interview. If you are being interviewed on radio or television, keep in mind that format as you practice.
- **Prepare for the unexpected:** You should always have guidelines in place for when things do not go quite as planned. These guidelines, sometimes known as crisis communication plans, should cover how to prepare for, act on, and recover from a situation or event that threatens or impacts the project’s operations or perceptions of the project, such as rumors or false information being spread about a specific health intervention.

If you are successful in engaging with the media, please share your experience and examples with us by contacting FPoptions@path.org.

Helpful hint:

To help you address misinformation, see “DMPA-SC key facts: Answering questions and dispelling common myths” within this Advocacy Pack.



Social media

Social media, which includes all forms of communication on social media platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and WhatsApp, can be a powerful tool for advancing your advocacy efforts to increase contraceptive choice and access. It can enable you to reach a broad audience and amplify your messages quickly.

When and why to use social media

Social media is a great way to:

- **Share your key messages** with a wide number and diversity of target audiences.
- **Create a dynamic dialogue** and engage your community on issues related to contraception.
- **Reach decision-makers directly**, as many policymakers and government officials have social media accounts.

How to use social media

- **Get online:** If your organization has institutional social media accounts, use them to share the messages below. You may also use your personal account to amplify the message within your network and beyond. Make sure your settings are on “public” so your posts can be widely seen and shared.
- **Start posting:** Use or adapt the sample messages below to fit your needs and context. Messages can be used on various platforms—be sure to adapt them depending on character count limits and other factors. You can also use social media to share other content you have created, such as blogs, media placements, photos, and videos.

Tips for success

- **Find your audience:** Talk to communications experts in your country to see which platforms are most commonly used. In some countries, X (formerly Twitter) might be the primary social media platform for online engagement. In other countries, a different platform, like LinkedIn, Facebook, or WhatsApp, might be more popular.
- **Engage in conversation:** Do not just send out your own messages and content. Social media is an effective way to engage in conversation. Follow influencers and share their content. Tag them in your messages. Monitor relevant hashtags and use them when appropriate. Try to post something at least once per week.
- **Time your messages for impact:** When possible, tie your messages to major moments related to family planning or women’s health for maximum visibility. This could include key relevant national or global moments—like commemoration days or conferences on family planning, reproductive health, or women’s rights.
- **Add a link:** Social media is an effective way to drive content to other sites, such as your organization’s website, a blog, or a media article. Include a link whenever possible.
- **Include visuals:** Social media content is more effective when you add a photo or other graphic. Be sure to obtain consent from anyone who is pictured. Also be sure you have permission from the photographer or organization that owns the image.

Major global moments

- International Women’s Day: March 8
- World Health Day: April 7
- Self-Care Month: June 24–July 24
- Self-Care Day: July 24
- World Population Day: July 11
- World Contraception Day: September 26

Example hashtags

#DMPASC	#contraception
#SelfInjection	#FP2030progress
#FamilyPlanning	#SRHR
#SelfCare4UHC	#reproductivehealth
#SelfCare4SRHR	#reprohealth

Example social media messages

Draw from the sample messages below, adapting them depending on your platform's character count limits and other factors.

Women who have more control over their fertility have greater opportunities for education, training, and employment. [#FamilyPlanning](#) [#DMPASC](#) [#SelfCare4UHC](#)

Decision-makers, donors, implementing orgs, B advocates must work together to ensure a wide mix of [#FamilyPlanning](#) options including [#DMPASC](#).

[#Contraceptives](#) like [#DMPASC](#) can have great impact on the health & lives of women—but only with political commitment and funding. [#SelfCare4UHC](#)

[#DMPASC](#) can help us meet [#FP2030](#) commitments by increasing access to new users and women in rural areas. [#FamilyPlanning](#)

[#DMPASC](#) [#contraception](#) has many benefits for women: it's discreet, small, easy to use, and can be self-injected. [#SelfCare4UHC](#)

Q: Can most women use [#DMPASC](#)? A: YES. It is a safe and easy-to-use [#contraceptive](#) option for most women.

[#DMPASC](#) [#SelfInjection](#) puts the power of [#contraception](#) in women's hands to manage their lives & have greater opportunity. [#FamilyPlanning](#)

[#DMPASC](#) can expand access to [#FamilyPlanning](#) through community-based distribution, drug shops, and pharmacies.

Having a wide range of [#contraceptive](#) options available to women is crucial. Women who can prevent unintended pregnancy have greater opportunities for education, training, and employment. The self-injectable [#DMPASC](#) is an important contraceptive choice for many women. It is safe, effective, small, and easy to use—especially for community health workers and for women to self-inject. Learn more: www.FPoptions.org.

We're excited about the difference that injectable contraception, including [#DMPASC](#), can make in the health and lives of women and adolescent girls. Today is World Contraception Day, and we are committed to work with our many partners to ensure injectables, as part of a broad method mix, are widely accessible. Learn more: www.FPoptions.org.