

Intramuscular progesterone for women attending the preterm birth prevention clinic

Information Leaflet

What is Progesterone?

Progesterone is a natural hormone. It is produced by your body in pregnancy.

What is preterm birth?

This refers to birth less than 37 weeks of pregnancy. Babies that are born preterm have an increased risk of health problems. The team in the preterm birth prevention clinic aim to work with families to reduce their risk of preterm birth.

Why is it important for women attending the preterm birth prevention clinic?

Research has shown that extra progesterone can help you have a full length pregnancy.

You have been identified as someone who has a higher risk of preterm birth. This is because in a previous pregnancy your baby was born early, or your waters broke early. A medication to prevent preterm birth could be especially helpful in your pregnancy.

What does the research say I should do?

If you are pregnant with one baby-

- Use progesterone from 16 to 36 weeks of pregnancy
- Progesterone is given as an injection into a muscle. This is normally a muscle in your bottom.
- The injection is given weekly

How much will this help?

Your doctor will be able to discuss this more fully with you. Importantly progesterone will not prevent all preterm births.

Is there any other way to get progesterone?

Progesterone can also be given vaginally. This would be taken as a pessary placed into the vagina by yourself every night from 16 to 37 weeks of pregnancy.

Your doctor will discuss the best way of taking the medicine with you.

Are there any risks of taking progesterone in pregnancy?

Progesterone medications are thought to be safe for the baby when taken after 12 weeks of pregnancy.

Are there any side effects of taking progesterone during pregnancy?

The injection will be sore.

Your symptoms of pregnancy might become more pronounced with progesterone, such as breast tenderness and nausea.

The use of progesterone injections in pregnancy is quite rare in the UK and so uncommon complications are not as well understood as for common medications. Potential rare complications are: hair loss, breast changes, cervical abnormalities, depression, drowsiness, fever, increased body hair, difficulty sleeping, jaundice (liver problems), nausea, swelling, skin reactions, weight increase.

If you are concerned about a side effect you should seek medical advice from a health professional.

Is progesterone licenced for pregnancy?

Most medications used in pregnancy do not have a licence. There are currently no injections of progesterone with licences for preventing preterm birth in the UK.

To get a licence, the drug company must prove that the medicine works and that it is safe to use, by testing it during clinical trials. The research showing a benefit of progesterone injections in pregnancy is mostly from America. Progesterone injections in pregnancy are licenced for use in America.

As a preterm birth prevention team we feel that the progesterone medication that we are recommending will be of benefit to your pregnancy.

Where can I find out more?

On the March of Dimes website: <https://www.marchofdimes.org/complications/progesterone-treatment-to-help-prevent-premature-birth.aspx>

This leaflet can be made available in difference formats on request. If you would like to make any suggestions or comments about the content of this leaflet, then please contact the Patient Experience Team on 0151 702 4353 or by email at pals@lwh.nhs.uk