

Progesterone in Pregnancy

What is Progesterone?

Progesterone is a pregnancy hormone that helps the fertilised egg implant in the uterus to establish and maintain a pregnancy.

It is produced in early pregnancy by a cyst in the ovary that remains after ovulation called the Corpus Luteum. Progesterone is vital in maintaining the pregnancy and nurturing your baby as it starts to grow.

Why am I being offered it in my pregnancy?

There is evidence¹ that progesterone can increase the chances of a pregnancy progressing to a live baby for some women. Women who may benefit include

- Women who have undergone fertility treatment
- Women who have had a previous miscarriage and have vaginal bleeding ²
- Women who have suffered more than 3 miscarriages without bleeding through the recurrent miscarriage clinic

Where can I access support for miscarriage and pregnancy loss?

Please feel free to ask your healthcare professional any questions you have. There are many resources available both nationally and locally. We have listed a few below.

National organisations

Tommy's

<https://www.tommys.org/baby-loss-support/miscarriage-information-and-support>

The Miscarriage Association - <https://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk>

Local support

Cradle

Contact at info@cradlecharity.org

Facebook webpage https://www.facebook.com/cradlecharity.org/?ref=py_c

LWH Honeysuckle team

Contact at email honeysuckle@lwh.nhs.uk or telephone, office hours Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm on 0151 702 4151

Website <https://www.liverpoolwomens.nhs.uk/patients/honeysuckle-bereavement-service/>

How will I take the progesterone?

The progesterone we use for preventing miscarriage is a small bullet shaped suppository. It can be taken vaginally or rectally. We most commonly ask you to take it twice a day.

Always wash your hands before and after inserting the pessary. To insert the pessary vaginally, place it between the lips of the vagina and push the pessary upwards and backwards. Some women find it easier to do this lying down or in a squatting position.

To insert it rectally (back passage), gently push the pessary into the rectum for about one inch. Your muscles will hold the pessary in place when it is in far enough. Squeeze your buttocks together for a few seconds.

It is recommended to lie for thirty to sixty minutes after inserting the suppository. Alternatively, your doctor may recommend putting it in just before bed.

Is Progesterone safe for my baby?

Yes, progesterone use is not known to be harmful to you or your baby during pregnancy. Progesterone has shown to help prevent early pregnancy loss and increase birth rates for selected women¹.

Progesterone is a naturally occurring female sex hormone that is produced by the ovaries during the menstrual cycle and the placenta during pregnancy. It is not known to be harmful to you or your baby.

What does it mean that Progesterone is not licensed in pregnancy?

Most medicines used in the UK have a 'licence' that states how it should be used (e.g. which health conditions it treats and the recommended dosages). This licence may not include use in pregnancy; however, this does not necessarily mean that it is not safe to use in pregnancy. To get a licence, a drug company must first conduct clinical trials to show that the medicine works and that it is safe to use. To obtain a licence for use in pregnancy, clinical trials involving pregnant people are required; this can be difficult to do for many reasons. As a result, many medicines are used in pregnancy outside the terms of their license (also called 'off-label' use).

In some instances, your doctor may recommend that a medication is used outside of the license if they think it will treat your condition or medical problem effectively and the benefits are greater than any risks. In this case, progesterone has been used in early pregnancy for a long time, and it has been shown to help prevent early pregnancy loss and increase birth rates for selected women.

What can I expect when taking Progesterone?

Not everyone gets side effects from a medication however it is good to know what can occur.

Common side effects when using progesterone: (occurring in approximately 1:10 women who take this medication)

- Change in vaginal discharge when used vaginally
- Abdominal distension (swelling in the abdomen), abdominal pain, constipation
- Sleepiness
- Tiredness
- Hot flush
- Breast pain

Uncommon side effects: (occurring in approximately 1:100 women who take this medication)

- Headache, dizziness, mood changes
- Change in taste, vomiting, flatulence (wind), diarrhoea, bloat (gastric dilatation), rectal tumour
- Night sweats, skin rash or itching
- Joint pain
- Pelvic pain, ovarian enlargement, vaginal bleeding
- Frequent urination, involuntary excretion of urine
- Weight increase
- Bleeding
- Itching at the application site, feeling cold or body temperature change or general discomfort

Some people can be allergic to Progesterone as with any new medication. Please stop using Progesterone and call 999 or go to A&E if you suffer with any of the following:

- Skin rash, which may be itchy
- Swelling of the face, lips or mouth
- Wheeze
- Tightness in chest or throat
- Difficulty breathing

Is there any reason I should not take progesterone?

You should not take progesterone if any of the following apply to you:

- You are allergic to progesterone
- Have unusual vaginal bleeding that has not been evaluated by the doctor
- You have severe liver disease
- You have breast or genital tract carcinoma
- You have thrombophlebitis

- You have or have had blood clots in a vein (thrombosis), such as in the legs (deep venous thrombosis) or the lungs (pulmonary embolism)
- You have a history of brain haemorrhage
- You have a rare blood problem called "porphyria" which is passed down in families (inherited)
- You are pregnant but your baby has died inside of you (miscarriage)

Contact your doctor or nurse if you have any concerns, especially if you experience any of the following symptoms during your treatment:

- Pains in the calves or chest
- Sudden shortness of breath
- Coughing blood
- Severe headache or vomiting, dizziness or faintness
- Changes in vision or speech
- Weakness or numbness of an arm or leg
- Worsening of depression

Does progesterone interact with any other medications?

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking, have recently taken or might in the near future take any other medicines. This includes medicines obtained without a prescription, including herbal medicines.

In particular tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any of the following medicines:

- Bromocriptine used for problems with the pituitary gland or Parkinson's Disease.
- Cyclosporin (used to suppress the immune system).
- Rifamycin medicines such as rifampicin (used to treat infections).
- Ketoconazole (used for fungal infections).
- Carbamazepine (to prevent fits, treat certain type of pain or mood disorders)
- Phenytoin (to prevent fits or treat certain type of pain) may decrease the effectiveness of progesterone.

What should I do if I take more progesterone than I should?

If you have accidentally swallowed any of the pessaries, or inserted too many, please contact your nearest hospital emergency department or doctor immediately for advice.

What if I forget to use my progesterone?

If you forget to insert a pessary, do so as soon as possible. If it is nearly time to take your next dose, then skip the missed dose altogether. It is important to never use two doses together.

If you are someone who frequently forgets to take their medication, it may be beneficial to set a reminder or an alarm to help you take it on time. A pharmacist is another great person to ask for advice if you're still struggling.

Support services

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