

Breastfeeding and Medication



Progesterone Pessaries and breastfeeding

Progesterone is often used as a pessary or suppository during pregnancy to help with threatened miscarriages or as part of assisted conception (IVF methods). Progesterone is poorly absorbed orally, because it undergoes rapid and extensive intestinal and liver metabolism. As it is virtually unabsorbed orally the use of a pessary is preferred as a route of administration. Absorption through the vagina produces higher uterine levels and is called the 'uterine first-pass effect' (Hale)

From contacts from mothers, it may be offered as a precaution, sometimes with low dose aspirin. Some of the mothers may still be breastfeeding. Progesterone pessaries are compatible with breastfeeding because of the significantly limited oral absorption (Cyclogest®/Utrogestan®).

References

- Dante G, Vaccaro V, Facchinetti F. Use of progestagens during early pregnancy. *Facts Views Vis Obgyn.* 2013;5(1):66-71.
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- Coomasamy A, Williams H, Truchanowicz E, et al. PROMISE: first-trimester progesterone therapy in women with a history of unexplained recurrent miscarriages – a randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled, international multicentre trial and economic evaluation. Southampton (UK): NIHR Journals Library; 2016 May. (Health Technology Assessment, No. 20.41.) Chapter 1, Introduction. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK362730/>

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May 2021 The information on this sheet is based upon my professional experience as a pharmacist with a specialised interest in the safety of drugs in breastmilk, supported by evidence from expert sources. However, I cannot take responsibility for the prescription of medication which remains with the healthcare professionals involved. I am happy to discuss the evidence by email wendy@breastfeeding-and-medication.co.uk