

Common Questions and Answers about Progesterone

1 HOW IS PROGESTERONE GIVEN?

Progesterone can be given as a shot once a week or as a vaginal suppository, capsule, or gel. Treatment can begin as early as 16 weeks into pregnancy and continue until your 36th week.

Shots may be given at your doctor's office or in your home. If you choose suppositories, capsules, or gel, you can place them in your vagina yourself every night before bedtime.

For women with a short cervix (which is the opening to your uterus, where your baby grows inside you), vaginal capsules, suppositories, or gel are thought to work best. You can place these inside your vagina and they deliver progesterone directly to your cervix.

Your doctor can perform an ultrasound test to find out if you have a short cervix (see #5).

2 IS IT SAFE?

Yes. This medicine is safe for you and your baby. Remember, your body already has progesterone in it, and the medicine gives you more at a time when you need it most.

3 ARE THERE SIDE EFFECTS?

Progesterone does not have any harmful effects on babies. For mothers, side effects are rare, but may include redness, soreness, or itching at the site where the shot is given. The suppositories may cause vaginal dryness. Sometimes, headaches may occur with both.

4 HOW WELL DOES IT WORK?

Treatment does not mean you will have a full-term pregnancy. But if you've had a preterm birth before, progesterone can decrease your chances of having another one by as much as 35 percent. No other treatment works better.



5 HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE A SHORT CERVIX?

The best way to know the length of a pregnant woman's cervix is to do a transvaginal ultrasound at 18-to-24 weeks of pregnancy. A transvaginal ultrasound allows doctors to see inside your body, including your unborn baby and your cervix. If your cervix is less than 20 millimeters long about halfway through pregnancy, you have a short cervix.

6 WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT WHEN TAKING PROGESTERONE?

Taking progesterone is the best way for women who are more likely to have a preterm birth to help their babies grow to full term. But it is not a medicine that you take only once. It must be taken regularly over time. For the medicine to work best, women need a shot once a week or to use suppositories, capsules, or gel every night.

7 HOW DO I PAY FOR IT?

More and more health insurance companies are paying for this treatment, and Ohio's Medicaid program does as well. If you are worried about paying for progesterone, talk to your doctor. And if you do not have insurance, ask your doctor's office about options that may be available.