

Progesterone Pessaries in Pregnancy

Preterm Birth Prevention Clinic Patient Information

Who might benefit from vaginal progesterone?

We may suggest having vaginal progesterone if:

- your cervix is shorter than expected
- you have had an early (preterm) baby before
- you have had a late miscarriage between 16 and 24 weeks
- You have a stitch in your cervix.

What is the cervix?

The cervix is the lower part of the womb. It usually stays long and closed until late in pregnancy. If your cervix is short, there is a higher chance of:

- **Late miscarriage:** losing the baby between 16 and 24 weeks.
- **Early birth:** giving birth before 37 weeks.

If you have a short cervix, using these pessaries every day can lower this risk of an early birth by 34% to 45%.

What is vaginal progesterone and how does it help?

Progesterone is a natural hormone your body already makes during pregnancy.

Progesterone helps relax your womb and grow by:

- reducing inflammation
- delaying changes in your cervix that lead to labour

A pessary is a small tablet placed in the vagina. It melts and goes straight to where it is needed most.

Sometimes, the pessary can be used in your bottom (rectum) instead.

How do I use the pessary?

Use one pessary every night, at bedtime so it stays inside while you sleep.

- Wash your hands with soap and water before and after.
- Gently place the pessary into the vagina using your finger.
- Push it upwards and backwards as far as feels comfortable.

If putting it in your bottom, gently push the pessary in about 2-3 cm (1 inch) inside. You may need to do this for 1 week after having a stitch in your cervix, or if you have vaginal irritation.

Your midwife or doctor will tell you exactly when to start and stop (usually stopping at 36 weeks).

Are there any side effects?

Most will have no problems at all. A few may notice:

- Watery or chalky vaginal discharge (normal as the pessary melts)
- Mild itching or irritation
- Headaches
- Feeling tired
- Constipation

Is progesterone safe for my baby?

Yes. Progesterone pessaries have been used for many years and are safe for babies.

When should I seek advice?

Contact the **Maternity Advice Line straight away** if you have:

- Regular tummy pains, cramps, or tightenings
- Any vaginal bleeding
- Fluid leaking from the vagina
- A fever or feeling unwell

Keep using the pessaries every night, unless a doctor or midwife tells you to stop.

Key points to remember

- A short cervix can increase the chance of an early birth
- Progesterone is a safe way to lower that risk
- Use the pessary every night
- Chalky or watery discharge is normal

Contact details

If you have any concerns, please contact:

Maternity Advice Line

 **0300 369 0388**

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