

Breastfeeding and Medication



Breastfeeding and Progesterone (Cyclogest®)

It seems that many mothers who have had previous miscarriages are prescribed progesterone suppositories/pessaries (Cyclogest®) to protect subsequent pregnancies although results of the PROMISE study show lack of benefit (www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/research/the-promise-trial/). They are also used in IVF treatment.

Mothers who become pregnant in these situations may still be breastfeeding an older child and from the questions I receive are concerned about the effect of the progesterone on their nursing.

Progesterone has also been used in the past to prevent and treat post-natal depression following the work of Dr Katarina Dalton (Depression after Childbirth 2001).

Progesterone, the natural compound, is poorly absorbed from the gut (hence the use vaginally or rectally) compared to the manufactured progestogens which are in the pill etc. It is a naturally occurring steroid secreted by the ovary, placenta and adrenal gland. It is subject to extensive first pass metabolism so amount in breastmilk would be low and absorption by the baby expected to be insignificant.

Mothers may be additionally treated with low dose aspirin - see www.breastfeeding-and-medication.co.uk/fact-sheet/low-dose-aspirin-and-breastfeeding

References:

- Hale TW Medications and Mother's Milk online access
- Martindale 2017
- Jones W. Breastfeeding and Medication 2018

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November 2018 *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*