Vaginal Progesterone for Short Cervix

What Is Progesterone?
Progesterone is a naturally occurring hormone made by the ovaries and the placenta. During pregnancy, progesterone may help prevent preterm birth by decreasing contractions of the uterus, preventing opening of the cervix and decreasing inflammation.

Why Is Progesterone Inserted Into the Vagina Rather Than Swallowed?
Progesterone is believed that the medicine is most effective for a short cervix if it is inserted into the vagina, so most of the medicine goes directly to the cervix.

What Is Prometrium?
Prometrium is the brand name of a capsule containing natural progesterone and a small amount of peanut oil. For a short cervix, your doctor may prescribe a 200 mg capsule. There are several FDA-approved generic forms that can be substituted for the brand name version. The generics should be identical to Prometrium and are usually less expensive. Your pharmacist can make this substitution unless "dispense as written" is indicated on the prescription.



The picture shows three different brands of 200 mg progesterone, Prometrium (SV2) and two generics. The generics are acceptable substitutes for the brand name Prometrium. All of them contain peanut oil.

Where Do I Get the Medicine?
Many local pharmacies keep Prometrium in stock. Others may need to order it, which can take a few days. We would like you to start the medicine as soon as possible, so we suggest you call local pharmacies and find one that has it in stock before you take the prescription to be filled.

When Do I Take the Medicine?
Once a day, at bedtime.

When Should I Start?
Once you have the medicine, you should start it that night.

How Long Should I Use It?
You should continue taking progesterone until you reach 37 weeks of pregnancy (i.e., three weeks before your due date). For example, if your due date is a Monday, your last dose of progesterone will be on a Sunday night, three weeks before your due date.

How Do I Insert the Progesterone Capsule?
1. Insert the medication at bedtime.
2. Wash your hands with soap and water.
3. Gently insert the capsule into the vagina with your finger and push it into the vagina as far as it will comfortably go. You may insert the capsule while lying down, sitting or standing—whatever you find easiest. Lying down after application will reduce leakage of the medication.
4. The capsule contains peanut oil, so when it dissolves, you may have a small amount of oily discharge. We recommend using a panty liner or sanitary pad to prevent the oil from getting on your bedclothes or sheets. Do not use a tampon.

What If I Miss a Dose?
If you miss a dose of progesterone, take it as soon as you remember, unless it is time for the next dose, in which case skip the missed dose. Do not take a double dose.

Are There Potential Side Effects?
The most common side effect is a scant amount of oily discharge, which is the release of the oil in the capsule. This is easily managed by wearing a panty liner.

Progesterone has no known adverse effects on the developing fetus. In fact, progesterone is necessary for a healthy pregnancy. The placenta makes large amounts of progesterone. The added progesterone inserted vaginally is a supplement to the progesterone already present in all pregnancies.

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The following side effects have been reported when progesterone is given to women who are not pregnant: nausea, bloating, breast tenderness, headache, change in vaginal discharge, mood swings, blurred vision, dizziness or drowsiness may occur. Many pregnant women already experience these symptoms, and this may be because of the progesterone made by the placenta. We do not expect that these will increase significantly by adding a small amount of added progesterone in the vaginal capsule. However, if any of these effects persist or worsen, notify your doctor.

Are There Any Precautions?

Prometrium contains peanut oil. Do NOT take this medication if you have a peanut allergy.
If you have had a previous allergic reaction to Prometrium or other formulations of vaginal progesterone, you should NOT take this medication. If you have a history of any of the following problems, speak to your doctor before taking this medication:

- history of blood clots
- history of hypertension or heart disease
- history of seizures
- history of depression
- history of lupus
- liver or kidney disease
- cancer of the breast or other female organs
- vaginal bleeding of unknown cause
- recent stroke or heart attack (within 1 year)

This drug may make you dizzy or drowsy. Do not drive, use machinery or do any activity that requires alertness until you are sure you can perform such activities safely. Do not stop medication without discussing it with your doctor ahead of time. Do not smoke. Smoking combined with this medication may increase your risk for strokes, blood clots, high blood pressure and heart attacks. This medication may cause blotchy, dark areas on your skin (melasma). Sunlight may worsen this effect. Avoid prolonged sun exposure, tanning booths and sunlamps. Use sunscreen and wear protective clothing when outdoors.

When Should I Contact My Doctor While Taking Progesterone?

If you experience any of the following, please contact your doctor.

- Pain associated with redness and/or swelling in one or both legs
- Persistent or worsening feelings of depression or mood swings
- A discharge that is unusual in color, consistency or amount
- A burning or itching sensation in the vaginal area
- A foul odor associated with vaginal discharge
- Shortness of breath
- Vaginal bleeding
- Preterm labor symptoms, including:
  - Contractions
  - Leaking fluid from your vagina
  - Pelvic pressure
  - Low, dull backache
  - Cramps that feel like your period
  - Abdominal cramps with or without diarrhea

How do I store progesterone, and what do I do with any leftover medication after delivery?

Store at room temperature (77° F or 25° C) away from light and moisture. Keep all medicines away from children and pets.

Do not flush medications down the toilet or pour them into a drain unless instructed. Properly discard this product when it is expired or no longer needed. Consult your pharmacist or local waste disposal company for more details about safely discarding your product.

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