Treatment using gonadotrophin releasing hormone (GnRH) analogues

Information for patients
Gynaecology
We have written this leaflet to provide you with information about your treatment using gonadotropin releasing hormone analogues (GnRH).

**What are GnRH analogues?**

GnRH analogues are synthetic hormones used to reduce the amount of oestrogen circulating in your body.

**How do GnRH analogues work?**

Your body produces GnRH naturally. The analogue works by blocking receptors so that your ovaries become inactive and do not produce the female hormone oestrogen.
What are the benefits of using GnRH analogues?

Reducing levels of oestrogen can help with different conditions including:

- **Endometriosis**, a condition in which cells similar to those found in the endometrium (lining of the womb) develop elsewhere, most commonly on other organs near the uterus (womb). Suppression of the menstrual cycle by GnRH analogues may lead to a relief in your symptoms.

- **Uterine fibroid(s)**, (benign growths found in the uterus). Suppressing ovarian function with GnRH analogues may shrink the fibroid(s), stop menstrual bleeding and reduce abdominal pain. However when the treatment is stopped the fibroid(s) rapidly regrow so it is mainly used to shrink the fibroid(s) before surgery.

- GnRH analogues can also reduce the thickness of the endometrium in preparation for procedures, such as endometrial ablation or resection of fibroid(s).

How do I take GnRH analogues?

GnRH analogues are usually given as an injection but certain brands can also be given as a nasal spray.

- **Injections** - may be given under the skin in your stomach or into the muscle of your arm, thigh or buttock. You may need a course of treatment or only one injection. Your doctor or nurse will discuss this with you.

- **Nasal spray** - is usually prescribed twice a day for six months. Your doctor or nurse will explain this to you.
Are there any risks or side effects?

As with all medication GnRH analogues may produce some unwanted side effects. These may include:

- Hot flushes
- Vaginal dryness
- Mood changes including depression
- Changes in breast size or breast tenderness
- Headaches
- Occasionally hair loss
- Change in sex drive
- Possible irregular menstrual bleeding for the first month
- Insomnia
- Thinning of the bones (with long term use)

Your doctor may advise you to take hormone replacement therapy (HRT) to reduce these side effects. If you experience heavy or unusual vaginal blood loss and / or pain associated with the menstrual loss contact your doctor immediately.

Occasionally GnRH analogues might also cause allergic reactions. These might include:

- Skin rash
- Itching
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain

If any or all of these symptoms occur contact your doctor immediately.
Can I still get pregnant whilst using GnRH analogues?

Yes, although the treatment with GnRH analogues will cause your periods to stop it is not in itself a form of contraception. It is important that you use adequate contraceptive precautions whilst on this treatment.

What sort of contraception can I use?

You will need to use a barrier method of contraception, for example, condoms or a diaphragm whilst having this treatment. You should not take the oral contraceptive pill.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

If you need any further information then please do not hesitate to contact:

- Gynaecology Outpatient Department: 0114 226 8441
Alternative formats can be available on request.
Please email: alternativeformats@sth.nhs.uk

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