

Progesterone Fertility Guide

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Hormonal Balance is an important factor when it comes to healthy fertility and getting pregnant. During the course of a menstrual cycle various hormones are working together in a complex symphony to trigger the various components of ovulation and menstruation.

Progesterone is one of these key hormones. After ovulation progesterone production is triggered by Luteinizing Hormone (LH) which stimulates the corpus luteum (the remnant egg sac) in the ovary to produce progesterone. One of the main actions of progesterone with fertility is to help support a developing embryo.

If pregnancy occurs, the production of progesterone from the corpus luteum continues for about 7 weeks (it is then produced by the placenta for the duration of the pregnancy). If pregnancy did not occur, the period begins 14 days after ovulation. When fertilization does not occur the corpus luteum disintegrates, which causes the level of progesterone to fall and the endometrial tissue to disintegrate and shed as menstruation.

Menstrual Cycle

What Does Progesterone Do?

- Progesterone maintains the lining of the uterus which makes it possible for a fertilized egg to attach and survive
- Makes cervical mucous accessible by sperm
- Allows the embryo to survive
- Prevents immune rejection of the developing baby
- Allows for full development of the fetus through pregnancy
- Helps the body use fat for energy during pregnancy
- Prevents secondary sexual development
- Increases libido around ovulation
- Activates osteoblasts to increase new bone formation
- Protects against endometrial, breast, ovarian and prostate cancer
- Normalizes blood clotting

Are You Progesterone Deficient or Estrogen Dominate?

Too much estrogen in the body

One of the main reasons women are progesterone deficient is because they have too much estrogen in the body. Estrogen dominance can happen for many reasons:

Commercially raised meats and dairy contain large amounts of estrogens, and consuming them can cause hormonal imbalance.

Pollution and stress mimic estrogen at the estrogen receptor sites.

Eating a large amount of processed soy products can also mimic estrogen.

PCOS and endometriosis can also have an estrogen dominate action.

Symptoms of estrogen dominance:

- Allergy symptoms like asthma and hives
- Breast cancer
- Breast tenderness
- Decreased sex drive
- Depression with agitation and/or anxiety
- Dry eyes
- Early onset of menstruation
- Fat gain, usually around the middles
- Fatigue
- Sluggish metabolism
- Foggy thinking
- Hair loss
- Headaches
- Increased blood clotting
- Fertility issues
- Irregular periods
- Insomnia
- PMS
- Polycystic ovaries

Not enough progesterone in the body

There are many signs that may show up in the body if you do not have enough progesterone in your system during the correct times of your cycle.

Symptoms of progesterone deficiency:

- Recurrent early miscarriage
- No period
- Not ovulating
- Endometriosis
- PCOS
- PMS
- Cramps during menses
- Blood clotting
- Swollen breasts
- Fibrocystic breasts
- Loss of libido
- Obesity
- Depression
- Water retention
- Low thyroid
- Facial hair
- Hot flashes
- Night sweats
- Vaginal dryness
- Foggy thinking
- Memory lapse
- Incontinence
- Tearful
- Depressed
- Sleep disturbances
- Heart palpitations
- Bone loss

Hormone Testing

Hormones testing can be diagnosed by a doctor, naturopath or by tests. There are a couple of test options. Tests range from charting your menstrual and basal body temperature, finding out the length of your luteal phase, or taking saliva or blood tests to find out your progesterone levels. The questionnaire above help to point out signs of progesterone deficiency while these tests help to confirm it.

BBT Charting

Basal Body Temperature charting can help to determine the availability of progesterone in the luteal phase. You can learn more about BBT Charting [here](#). There will be a slight rise in temperature after ovulation has occurred and progesterone has increased.

Length of Luteal Phase

If the date of ovulation is fewer than 11 days before your period, this could suggest luteal phase defects. You can detect ovulation using BBT charting, ovulation detector strip tests.

Saliva Hormonal Testing

Dr. John Lee was very adamant that testing for hormones and progesterone should be done through saliva testing, not blood testing (almost all doctors will test the blood). You can order an “at home” saliva test that you will take at a certain time during your cycle and then send away to a lab for analysis. They will then mail back the results so you can find out if you have any hormonal imbalances. You can order FDA approved home female hormone tests [here](#).

Blood Hormonal Testing

While Dr. Lee was adamant about getting progesterone testing through saliva, it may be more helpful to work with your doctor to get your progesterone tested so they can explain the test results to you, even if it is a blood test. You most likely will also have other hormones tested at the same time which can give you insights to your entire hormonal profile.

When to Get Your Progesterone Levels Tested

The most appropriate time to measure serum progesterone is mid luteal phase (either 7 days after ovulation, or 7 days prior to expected menses). This is when you’re most likely to catch the peak progesterone level. This day will vary according to a woman’s cycle length however (for example, for a 28 day cycle, a day 21 progesterone is appropriate; but for a 35 day cycle, progesterone would ideally be measured around day 28).

How to Support Progesterone Levels

1. Reduce your exposure to xenohormones

We have become an estrogen dominate society from all of the excess estrogen in our foods and environment.

Reduce your exposure by avoiding these xenohormone producers:

- Solvents and adhesives
- Meat from conventionally raised livestock (non-organic)
- Car exhaust
- Almost all plastics
- Petrochemically derived pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides
- Emulsifiers found in soaps and cosmetics
- PCD's from industrial waste

2. Vitex for Hormonal Balance

Vitex Extract (Chaste Tree Berry) is one of the most powerful herbs for women's fertility and menstrual health. There are numerous studies and testimonials of Vitex and it's effects on the body. One of the reasons Vitex is so effective and popular is because of its ability to balance hormones while not containing hormones itself.

Vitex supports hormonal balance in the body by having an effect on the hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian axins (hormonal feedback loop), correcting the problem at the source.

Directions for use

Capsules: 1,000mg a day is the suggested amount to use. Take vitex all month.

Tincture: 90 drops in water or juice, first thing in the morning. All month long.

However, unlike powerful hormone drugs, vitex works slowly to normalize the body. Maximum benefits are often achieved after 6-12 cycles with vitex.

3. Use Natural Progesterone Cream

Natural progesterone cream can help to supplement your body's own progesterone levels and lead you back to a state of natural balance.

Natural progesterone cream comes from plant fats and oils called diosgenin which is extracted either from Mexican Wild Yams or soybeans. In the laboratory

diosgenin is chemically synthesized into a molecular structure that is identical to real human progesterone.

The United States Pharmacopoeia (USP) denotes a recognized standard of purity and strength. It is sometimes referred to as “human-identical” or “bio-identical” progesterone, which differentiates it from synthetic progestins or progestogens.

How to Use Progesterone Cream

Transdermal application (through the skin) has been found to be one of the most effective ways to use natural progesterone. It is absorbed through the skin into the underlying fat which helps to slowly allow progesterone into the blood. This way of application helps the progesterone to be “time released” into the blood stream. To closely mimic the body’s progesterone cycle, it is best to use progesterone cream twice a day.

How to Use Progesterone Cream for Fertility

Natural progesterone cream is easily and quickly absorbed into the body through the skin (within seconds). So you can apply it essentially anywhere as long as you rotate locations of application.

The best areas for application are places that have capillary blood flow such as:

- Face
- Neck
- Upper Chest
- Breasts
- Inner arms
- Palms of hands and feet

When it comes to dosage, more is not better. Too much progesterone may cause hormonal imbalances, just like too little progesterone can. General suggested dosage is 40mg daily, divided into one 20mg application in the am and one 20mg application in the pm, during the two weeks before your period.

Progesterone use should begin directly after ovulation, which is usually day 14 in the cycle (day 1 is the start of your period), and ending usage once menstruation begins. The best way to know exactly when to begin progesterone cream is to track ovulation with fertility charting. There are several ways to detect ovulation, such as OPK test strips, Ovulation Microscope and Basal Body Temperature (BBT) charting. Once ovulation is detected, progesterone cream would be started the following day.

What To Do Should You Become Pregnant

Once you become pregnant, stay on the progesterone and contact your healthcare provider. Read below for pregnancy instructions.

Loading Dose

A loading dose is useful for women who have had many months or years of anovulatory (no ovulation) cycles, which can create extreme progesterone deficiency. Each cycle that passes without ovulation can increase estrogen dominance as progesterone stores are depleted. Very thin women who have little body fat can become estrogen dominant very easily as there is no fat to store extra progesterone. In either of these situations Dr. John Lee recommends a higher dose of progesterone the first one to two months of progesterone cream use. This helps to replenish the progesterone stored in the fat of the body. After 2-3 months the dose can be lowered to the usual 'regular' dosage.

Note: Some progesterone creams come in a squeeze tube, like Emerita Pro-Gest, which uses teaspoons as a measurement for dose. 1/4 teaspoon of Emerita Pro-Gest equals 20mg of progesterone cream. Others, like our Fertilica Natural Progesterone come with a pump. Each pump measures out exactly 20mg of progesterone cream.

Loading dose: 40mg twice a day, one 40mg application in the morning and one 40mg application at night, for a total of 80mg of natural progesterone a day. Apply for two weeks before your period (about day 14 in the cycle), up until menstruation begins.

Regular dose: 20mg twice a day, one 20mg application in the morning and one 20mg application at night, for a total of 40mg of natural progesterone a day. Apply for two weeks before your period (about day 14 in the cycle), up until menstruation begins.

Inducing ovulation using progesterone

Dr. Lee had a number of patients in his practice that had been unable to conceive because they were not ovulating. For two to four months he had them use natural progesterone from days 5 to 26 in the cycle (stopping on day 26 to bring on menstruation).

Using the progesterone prior to ovulation effectively suppressed ovulation. After a few months of this, he had them stop progesterone use. If you still have follicles left, they seem to respond to a few months of suppression with enthusiasm — the successful maturation and release of an egg.

His patients, some of whom had been trying to conceive for years, had very good results conceiving with this method. To learn more about this type of application, please read Dr. Lee's book "What Your Doctor May Not Tell You About Premenopause."

Preventing Miscarriage & Progesterone

Low progesterone during pregnancy can be one cause of recurrent miscarriages. Progesterone is responsible for creating a healthy environment in the womb by maintaining the uterine lining. It also reduces the chances of blood clots and the immune system responding to the fetus as if it was a foreign substance. Progesterone is one of the main pregnancy hormones.

If you feel this might be your situation, talk with your doctor or healthcare practitioner and get your hormone levels tested before using progesterone as well as intermittently to make sure your levels are high enough. Working with a healthcare practitioner is helpful as they can help to monitor your hormonal levels.

Make sure to have at least two bottles on hand, because running out could cause a big drop in progesterone which may cause the menstrual cycle to begin. Contact your doctor or midwife once you become pregnant so they can monitor your progesterone levels during pregnancy.

Progesterone & PCOS

Progesterone cream can help to oppose the estrogen dominance that occurs with PCOS. By using progesterone cream you are able to mimic a natural cycle and help the body to establish its own cycle, including ovulating, again. Dr. John Lee believed that with progesterone cream, changes to the PCOS specific diet and exercise, PCOS could become obsolete.

How to use progesterone for PCOS

There are two ways to use progesterone cream for PCOS. The first is the Suppression Cycle. To suppress the cycle one would use progesterone cream on cycle days 7-26. If you do not have a menstrual cycle you would choose a date on your calendar and mark it as day 7. Suppressing the cycle allows the body to rest by stopping the cycle of eggs not being released and estrogen/androgen dominance. Dr. John Lee suggests to use 60-100mg of progesterone cream a day during the suppression cycle and to repeat this for 3-4 months for best results.

Establish a cycle with progesterone cream

To help your body create a cycle including menstruation and ovulation, use progesterone cream on day 12 of cycle and continue until day 26. By stopping on day 26 your progesterone levels will drop, helping to start your menstrual cycle. If your cycle does not start, just treat your cycle like you are having one and start again on day 12. It is best to use a calendar so you can keep track of everything. After 3 or so months it is suggested to take a break for 1 month so you can see if your cycle has jump started itself.

Progesterone & Endometriosis

If you have endometriosis, Dr. John Lee recommends using progesterone from days 8 to 26 of your cycle, to reduce the effects of estrogen on the body (estrogen stimulates endometrial growth). Take a short week off to refresh your receptor sites. He has had success with this controlling symptoms within six months. Once the outbreaks of endometriosis are tolerable reduce the usage to days 12 till menstrual cycle.

Progesterone Use During Pregnancy

Natural progesterone is safe to use during pregnancy with the consent of your doctor or midwife and may likely prevent many first trimester miscarriages that are due to low progesterone but should be used with caution when nursing as it may stop lactation.

In the first trimester of pregnancy progesterone production is the sole responsibility of the ovaries, but they often fail to produce sufficient levels to maintain the pregnancy. By the second trimester, the placenta itself is responsible for producing progesterone, and it hikes the level of this hormone to 486% higher than the non-pregnant norm.

If you are taking progesterone and get pregnant, you must continue taking progesterone until at least the 16th week. I personally would not stop if I had seriously low levels to begin with. But it is best to work with your health care practitioner if this is the case. They will continuously monitor your levels to make sure they are healthy for pregnancy. [Click here to learn more about proper use of natural progesterone cream use in pregnancy...](#)

Summary

Healthy progesterone levels are important during conception and pregnancy. You can find out if your levels are where they should be by getting tested. If you do find your levels are low there are many natural ways to promote healthy progesterone levels such as:

- 1. Reducing Xenohormones**
- 2. Using Vitex**
- 3. Applying progesterone cream**

****If you become pregnant, continue to use the cream and consult with your doctor or midwife right away.**

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