



Tahlequah Drug Compounding

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Women's Health & Wellness

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Frequently Asked Questions About Progesterone Cream

What is progesterone? Progesterone is a steroid hormone made by the corpus luteum when an egg is released from an ovary at ovulation, and in smaller amounts by the adrenal glands. Progesterone is manufactured in the body from the steroid hormone pregnenolone and is a precursor to most of the other steroid hormones, including cortisol, androstenedione, estrogen and testosterone. In a normally cycling female, the corpus luteum produces 20 to 30 mg of progesterone daily during the luteal phase of the menstrual cycle.

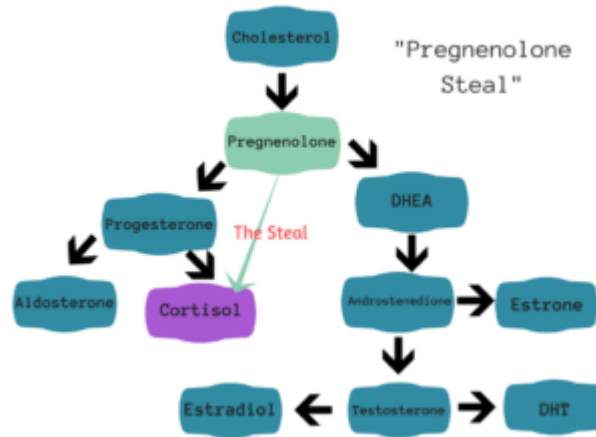
Why do women need progesterone? Progesterone is needed in hormone replacement therapy for menopausal women for many reasons, but one of its most important roles is to balance or oppose the effects of estrogen. Unopposed estrogen creates a strong risk for breast cancer and reproductive cancers. Estrogen levels drop only 40 to 60% at menopause, which is just enough to stop the menstrual cycle. But progesterone levels may drop to near zero in some women. Because progesterone is the precursor to so many other steroid hormones, its use can greatly enhance overall hormone balance after menopause. Progesterone also stimulates bone building and thus helps protect against osteoporosis.

Why not just use the progestin Provera (medroxyprogesterone) as prescribed by some doctors?

Progesterone is preferable to the synthetic progestins such as Provera, because it is natural to the body and has no undesirable side effects when used as directed. If you have any doubts about how different progesterone is from a progestin, remember that the placenta produces 300 to 400 mg of progesterone daily during the last few months of pregnancy, so we know that such levels are safe for the developing baby. But progestins, even at a fraction of this dose, can cause birth defects. The progestins also cause many other side effects, including breast cancer, increased risk of strokes, fluid retention, migraine headaches, asthma, cardiac irregularities and depression.

What is estrogen dominance? Dr. John R. Lee coined the term "estrogen dominance" to describe what happens when the normal ratio of balance of estrogen to progesterone is changed by excess estrogen or inadequate progesterone. Estrogen is a potent and potentially dangerous hormone when not balanced by adequate progesterone. Both women who have suffered from PMS and women that have suffered from menopausal symptoms will recognize the hallmark symptoms of estrogen dominance: weight gain, bloating, mood swings, irritability, tender breasts, headaches, fatigue, depression, hypoglycemia, uterine fibroids, endometriosis and fibrocystic breasts. Estrogen dominance is known to cause and/or contribute to cancer of the breast, ovary, endometrium (uterus) and prostate.

Why would a premenopausal woman need progesterone cream? In the 10 to 15 years before menopause, many women regularly have anovulatory cycles in which they make enough estrogen to create menstruation, but they don't make any progesterone, thus setting the stage for estrogen dominance. Using progesterone cream during anovulatory months can help prevent the symptoms of PMS. However, we now know that PMS can occur despite normal progesterone levels when stress is present. Stress increases cortisol production and the precursor for cortisol is progesterone. When progesterone is shunted to cortisol, we call this a "progesterone or pregnenolone steal". Additional progesterone is required to overcome this shunt and stress management is important.



What is progesterone made from? The USP progesterone used for hormone replacement comes from plant fats and oils, usually a substance called diosgenin which is extracted from a very specific type of wild yam that grows in Mexico or from soybeans. In the manufacturer's lab the diosgenin is chemically synthesized into the exact structure of natural progesterone. Some companies are trying to sell diosgenin which they label as "wild yam extract" claiming that the body will convert the extract into hormones. While we know that can be done in a laboratory, there is no evidence that this conversion takes place in the human body.

Where should I put the progesterone cream? Because progesterone is very fat-soluble, it is easily absorbed through the skin. Once administered subcutaneously the progesterone is absorbed into capillary blood. Apply the cream to thin skin with high capillary density chest, breast, inner arms, neck and palms of hands. Some women love the way progesterone works as a face cream. Rotate among 3 or 4 different skin sites on different days. Always apply after, not before, a bath or shower. If used at bedtime it may be calming and help you sleep.

What is the recommended dose of progesterone? For premenopausal women the usual dose is 20mg/day for 12 days before expected menses stopping the day or so before menses. For postmenopausal women, the dose is 20mg/day for 25 days of a calendar month.

How safe is progesterone cream? During the third trimester of pregnancy, the placenta produces about 300 mg of progesterone daily, so we know that a one time overdose of cream is virtually impossible. If you used a whole jar of cream at once, it might make you sleepy. More is not better when it comes to hormone balance. Using more progesterone than you need can cause the hormone to be stored in fat which will be slow to leach out.

What are the possible side effects of progesterone cream?

- 1) Lethargy or sleepiness: This is caused by its conversion to allopregnanolone
- 2) Edema: Excess conversion to deoxycortisone, a mineralocorticoid that causes water retention
- 3) Bloating: Excess progesterone slows GI transport which can lead to bloating & gas. During pregnancy the high levels of progesterone slowed food transport to enhance absorption of nutrients.
- 4) Exacerbated symptoms of estrogen deficiency: Excess progesterone in the absence of estrogen. A woman must have estrogen on board for progesterone to work.

Progesterone USP 2% Cream Dosing Guidelines:

Application: Apply cream to the neck, chest inside of the elbows, upper thighs, or lower abdomen. You can apply it to the wrist and then rub the wrist on the arms or legs. Rub the cream in for one minute. Alternate the locations each day.



If you are menopausal and have not taken any hormones it may take up to 3 months to restore your balance between estrogen and progesterone.

Do not take natural progesterone and synthetic progesterone (medroxyprogesterone, Provera or Depo Provera) at the same time. Caution should also be taken to prevent transference to others, including children and pets.

Fertility: Understand that using progesterone makes you more fertile. Do not take with birth control pills because it will decrease their effectiveness.

PMS: Apply 20 mg topically on days 14 thru 25 of cycle

Perimenopausal: Apply 20 to 40 mg topically on days 14 thru 25 of cycle

Menopausal: Apply 20 to 40mg topically daily. Take 3 to 5 days off a month (hormone holiday)

Migraines: Apply 20 mg once or twice daily for 10 days prior to your cycle.

Migraine Aura: Apply 20mg to base of neck every 3 hours for up to 2 doses

Fibrocystic Breasts: Apply 20mg twice daily from day 10 thru 23 (can be applied directly to breast)

****The above guidelines are meant to be used as a reference only. Individual dosage should be determined based on results of a hormone evaluation of each patient. Day one of your cycle is the first day of your cycle.**

Progesterone Cream from Tahlequah Drug: Progesterone cream does not require a prescription to purchase and because of this there are many products on the market. But not all progesterone creams are the same. Independent studies have revealed that progesterone creams may vary widely in potency and their ability to be absorbed.

You can trust your health care to our Pharmacists at Tahlequah Drug. We believe women's health care belongs in the medical profession, not in the vitamin aisle of a mass merchandiser. Not only are you assured that each batch is assayed but should you have questions of problems you have a pharmacist available to help.