

Shots to Help Prevent Preterm Labor

Preterm Labor

Having a baby too early (before 37 weeks) is known as a preterm birth. This can be dangerous because your baby may not be developed enough to live outside the uterus. Your baby can have serious health problems if born too early.

If you have had one preterm birth, you are at a higher risk for another.

Medicine to Help Prevent Preterm Birth

To help keep you from having your baby before 37 weeks, your health care provider wants you to have weekly injections (shots) of a medicine called 17P (17 alpha-hydroxyprogesterone caproate).

Research has shown this medicine helps keep pregnant women from having babies too early if they have already had a preterm birth.

The medicine has a relaxing effect on the uterus muscle, which helps to keep the muscle from tightening (contracting).

Who Can Have the Shots

You may qualify for 17P shots if you have already had a preterm birth and are pregnant with just one baby.

This medicine is not right for you if you:

- have a blood clotting disorder
- have high blood pressure that is not controlled
- have liver disease

- have breast cancer
- are pregnant with more than one baby.

Together, you and your health care provider will decide if 17P shots are right for you. If they are, check with your insurance provider to see if the treatment is covered under your plan.

When Shots Will Start

You will start having shots between 16 and 20 weeks. Before your first shot, you may need to have an ultrasound to confirm your due date.

How Often You Will Get Shots

You will need to have the shots every week, even if you are sick. Shots are given once a week, between 6 and 9 days apart.

You will receive shots into a large muscle, usually the buttocks. You may place an ice pack on the shot site 1 to 2 minutes before the shot to lessen the discomfort.

You can go to your clinic for the shots, or your health care provider can refer you to Home Health - Mother & Newborn to come to your home or work to give you the shots.

If the nurse is coming to your work, you will need to arrange for a private area to use when getting the shot.

If you need to travel during the time you would receive a shot, talk with your health care provider about your options.

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When Shots Will End

The last shot will be given at about the 36th week.

Risks of 17P Shots

Several studies have shown that 17P is safe for you and your baby.

This treatment does not work for everyone every time. This means you still have a risk of having your baby too early. You may still have preterm labor symptoms.

Follow your health care provider's instructions for other things you can do to help prevent preterm labor.

Side Effects of 17P Shots

Most side effects last for a short time. You may have some, all or none of the side effects listed below.

- After receiving a shot, you may notice these at the shot site:
 - discomfort
 - soreness
 - swelling
 - itching
 - bruising.
- You may have upset stomach (nausea) and loose stools (diarrhea).

When to Call Your Health Care Provider

Call your health care provider right away if you have any signs of an allergic reaction:

- hives
- swelling in your face or hands.

When to Call 911

Call 911 right away if you have:

- swelling or tingling in your mouth or throat
- tightness in your chest
- trouble breathing.

Warning Signs of Preterm Labor

Warning signs of preterm labor to watch for include:

- change or increase in vaginal discharge
- ruptured membranes (a slow leak, steady trickle, or sudden gush)
- six or more uterine contractions in 1 hour in a regular pattern
- menstrual-like cramps for more than 1 hour
- dull backache below the waist for more than 1 hour
- increased pelvic pressure for more than 1 hour
- throbbing in the vagina, cramps in the thighs, or feeling your baby pushing down
- intestinal cramping with or without diarrhea or indigestion for more than 1 hour.

If you think you are going into labor early, call your hospital's Birth Center.

Whom to Call With Questions or Concerns

For questions or concerns about your health, call your health care provider.