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Patient information leaflet

Ovulation induction with Letrozole (Femara®) or Clomid

What is letrozole and what is Clomid?

Letrozole belongs to a class of drugs called aromatase inhibitors. The prime and only licensed use of letrozole is as an additional (adjuvant) treatment of breast cancer in post-menopausal women. However, it showed advantages for egg release and pregnancy rates.

Clomid is a commonly used medication to start ovulation (egg release).

How does letrozole work?

Aromatase is an enzyme that is responsible for the production of oestrogen in the body. Letrozole works by inhibiting aromatase thereby suppressing oestrogen production.

How does Clomid work?

Clomiphene (Clomid) blocks oestrogen receptors. But is also blocks receptors on lining on the womb and in some cases that can cause issues with the growth of lining. It is one of the reasons why more number of women release egg with Clomid but not all achieve pregnancy.

In both cases, the result is that the pituitary gland produces more of the hormones needed to stimulate the ovaries. These hormones, FSH and LH, can cause the development of ovulation in women who do not ovulate.

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For Patient information /appointments please check our website <https://www.p4fertility.co.uk>

Contact : admin@p4fertility.co.uk

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What shall I choose?

There is no clear evidence of one over the other. The largest study is ongoing to compare Clomid and Letrozole. Initial studies showed few benefits with Letrozole than Clomid. Sometimes we may need to choose one to start with and change the tablet if we are not successful. Normally Letrozole is offered as the first line. But it is a patient choice.

What are the advantages of taking letrozole?

Many studies have recently shown that using letrozole for inducing ovulation results in better rates of successful ovulation and has no adverse effects on the lining of the womb.

A good quality study showed (<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1313517>) cumulative live births which means the chances to have a baby after completing five cycles

Letrozole group: 28% of Women had a baby or babies

Letrozole: 3.4% of women had twins

Clomid group - 19% of Women had a baby or babies

Clomid: 7.4% of women had twins

Therefore, letrozole offers marginally more chances of success with fewer chances of twins.

How do I use Clomid or letrozole?

The schedule for both tablets is similar.

If you are expected to get a period soon, we advise you to start below:

Letrozole Regime:

Day 1 is called when you get proper bleeding

Day 2 Start letrozole 5 mg (2 tablets) daily for 5 days From day 2 to Day 6

You may take tablets together. It does not matter if you take it in the morning or evening

Day 6 Last day to take letrozole tablets

Please start regular intercourse 2 or 3 times a week from day 8 of your cycle.

If you are on Clomid, the Clomid regime is as below:

Day 1 is called when you get proper bleeding

Day 2 Start Clomid 100 mg (2 tablets) daily for 5 days From day 2 to Day 6

You may take tablets together. It does not matter if you take it in the morning or evening

Day 6 Last day to take Clomid tablets

If your periods are irregular and your last period is more than 6 weeks ago.

We advise you to take the following tablet to get a period first before starting tablets after confirming a negative pregnancy test.

Provera 10 mg BD, for 5 days to start a period.

Then, you can start your letrozole or Clomid tablets as above:

How do we monitor ovulation – egg release?

It is ideal to monitor with ovulation scans. Please contact us to arrange scans once you start treatment on day 2 by calling p4fertility or email admin@p4fertility.co.uk. The scan cost could be discussed with our team.

During the covid crisis and to keep hospital visits down, you may choose to do urine test using ovulation test strips from day 12 to day16 of the cycle. As we can not monitor with scans, we do not get an opportunity to abandon cycle if more than one egg is developing. This means there are small chances of multiple pregnancies with this approach. You are required to be aware of these changes.

What happens if I do not get pregnant with the first cycle?

If your period starts, restart the letrozole / coming as before.

If your period does not start then, please get in touch:

1. Please do a pregnancy test.
2. If the test is negative, you can take a second course of Provera tablets
3. Then start letrozole or Clomid from day 2 to day 6 as recommended with a higher dose.
4. If after the second course, you still do not have a period, please do not take any further tablets. You need a follow-up appointment to plan a different approach.

Are there any side effects?

The most common side effect of taking letrozole or Clomid is hot flushes, as well as occasional fatigue and dizziness. Treatment with letrozole is off-license as the drug company has not applied for a specific license to allow fertility treatment and is therefore not approved for ovulation induction.

If you start getting any visual symptoms, please inform us and stop tablets.

There is no difference between side effects or risks using Clomid or letrozole.

The congenital anomaly risk in the baby is comparable to natural conception.

The risk of ectopic pregnancy or miscarriages is no different.

Diet and lifestyle advice?

The single most important factor affecting your treatment outcome is your weight. It is therefore important to ensure that you have a Body Mass Index (BMI) of less than 30. This can be by healthy eating and regular exercise.

Please visit www.p4fertility.co.uk for information.

We advise folic acid 400 mcg daily whilst trying for pregnancy, once pregnant continue folic acid until 12 weeks of pregnancy.

Next steps if no pregnancy?

If you wish to arrange scan monitoring, please arrange an appointment.

If you wish to move on to the next plan sooner, please let us know.

If you are not pregnant with a tablet regime, we will discuss further treatment, please arrange a follow-up appointment.

The next treatment plan could be (it will be discussed in follow up):

Use of injections,

Change in options

Surgery

IVF

Next steps when your test is positive?

Please let us know with a positive pregnancy test. We recommend booking an early pregnancy scan (6 weeks from your period) if you are pregnant. This will help us to diagnose normal pregnancy and check for twins.

We discharge you back to your GP after this for pregnancy care.

We may need to start you on additional medications if you have a clinical history of miscarriages or any other medical condition.

Any further questions: Please get in touch.

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