

Progesterone for threatened miscarriage

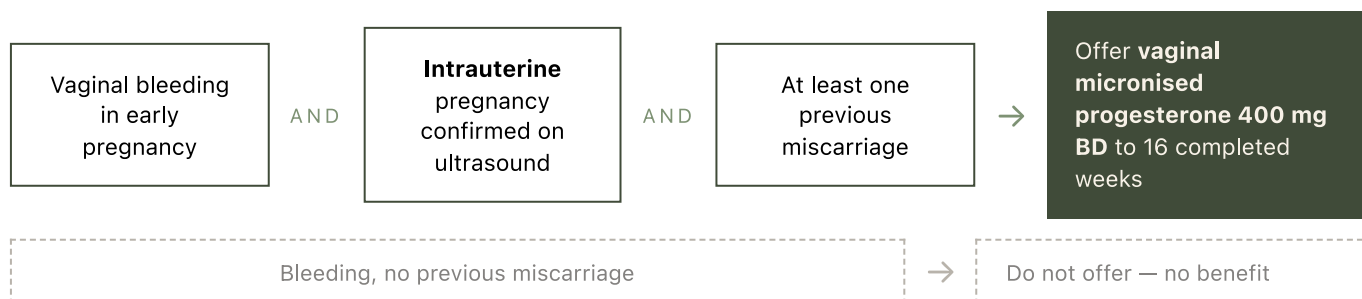
I welcome direct GP referrals and calls for advice.

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AT A GLANCE

- **Bleeding + intrauterine pregnancy on scan + at least one previous miscarriage** = offer vaginal micronised progesterone.
- **400 mg twice daily, vaginally, from presentation until 16 completed weeks.**
- **No previous miscarriage = no benefit.** No evidence to give. Though patients may request it.
- Off-label and not PBS-subsidised for this indication in Australia. Say so at the time of prescribing.
- An adjunct to assessment, not a substitute for one. Confirm location and viability first.

FIGURE 1 · ALL THREE GATES MUST BE OPEN

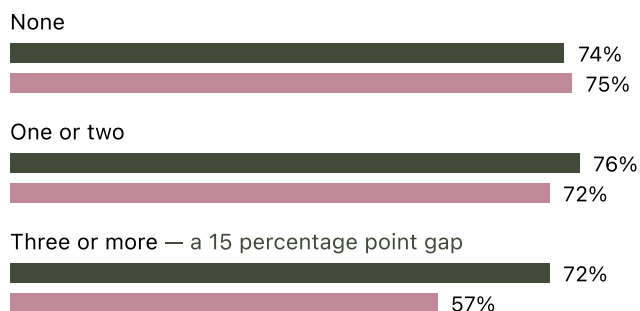


The evidence, briefly

The PRISM trial randomised 4153 women with bleeding in early pregnancy to vaginal micronised progesterone 400 mg twice daily or placebo. **Overall it was negative** — live birth after 34 weeks 75% vs 72%, relative rate 1.03 (95% CI 1.00–1.07, $p=0.08$). The signal sits in the pre-specified subgroups, by number of previous miscarriages.

FIGURE 2 · LIVE BIRTH BY PREVIOUS MISCARRIAGES

Progesterone ■ Placebo ■



COCHRANE NETWORK META-ANALYSIS

Rated **high certainty**:

≥1 previous miscarriage, with bleeding — increases live birth, RR 1.08 (1.02–1.15)

No previous miscarriage, with bleeding — little or no benefit, RR 0.99 (0.95–1.04)

Recurrent miscarriage without bleeding — little or no benefit, RR 1.04 (0.95–1.15). This is the PROMISE population, and a different question

Benefit is real but modest for most, and largest after three or more losses — roughly one extra live birth for every seven women treated in that group.

Prescribing

DRUG AND ROUTE	Micronised progesterone, vaginal route
DOSE	400 mg twice daily
AU PRODUCTS	Oripro pessaries 100 mg and 200 mg; Utrogestan 200 mg capsules used vaginally. 400 mg BD = two 200 mg units, twice daily
START	At presentation, once an intrauterine pregnancy is confirmed
STOP	At 16 completed weeks if a fetal heartbeat is confirmed
NOT VIABLE	Stop. Progesterone does not rescue a non-viable pregnancy, and continuing it may delay diagnosis

COUNSELLING POINTS

- Off-label: these products are registered in Australia for other indications, and are not PBS-subsidised here. Quote the out-of-pocket cost if you can
- Common effects: vaginal discharge and leakage from the pessary base, mild drowsiness, breast tenderness, bloating. Inserting at night helps with both the mess and the drowsiness
- No increase in congenital abnormalities or adverse drug events versus placebo, moderate certainty
- It does **not** cause a loss to be "missed" or delay the bleeding of a loss that has already occurred, but nor does it prevent one that is going to happen. Frame it honestly: it shifts the odds a little

EVERYTHING ELSE THAT MATTERS

Confirm the location. Ultrasound, and serial β hCG where the scan is indeterminate. A pregnancy of unknown location with bleeding needs an active plan, not reassurance.

Do not offer bed rest — no evidence, and it adds guilt.

Do say that up to a quarter of pregnancies bleed in the first trimester, and most continue normally.

Follow up. Repeat scan and a plan for who she calls. Early pregnancy loss is common and under-supported; a follow-up appointment booked in advance is worth more than a pamphlet.

ANTI-D QUICK REFERENCE			
Sensitising event <12 weeks	From 13 weeks	Routine prophylaxis	Threatened miscarriage <12 weeks
250 IU	625 IU	625 IU	
Within 72 hours — miscarriage, ectopic, molar, CVS		At 28 and 34 weeks	Not routine in Australia — insufficient evidence. Consider if bleeding is heavy, repeated or painful

REFER TO / DISCUSS WITH THE OBSTETRICIAN	
Pregnancy of unknown location, or any concern about ectopic	Three or more miscarriages, or two with additional risk factors — for recurrent miscarriage investigation
Heavy bleeding, haemodynamic compromise or severe pain — same day, emergency	Rh D negative with a sensitising event, if you are unsure of the indication or dose
Any woman wanting to discuss whether progesterone is right for her	Rooms 03 8400 6193 · hello@drjamesaridas.com.au