

## PATIENT INFORMATION

# Letrozole Treatment

## What is letrozole?

Letrozole is a fertility drug to stimulate and/or regulate ovulation and is used as an alternative to clomifene. Letrozole is an aromatase inhibitor and works by lowering the production of oestrogen. Letrozole has also been shown to be effective at inducing ovulation in fertility patients and may be more effective than clomifene in certain patients. Treatment may increase the chance of a twin pregnancy.

## What are the benefits of taking letrozole?

The benefits of taking letrozole tablets are to encourage or regulate ovulation to achieve a pregnancy. The half-life of letrozole is very short (2 days) compared to clomifene. This means the medication is metabolized more rapidly and the side effects are less. Letrozole does not affect the cervical mucus or endometrial (womb) lining as much as clomifene. This is better for sperm transport in the cervix and a more favourable lining for implantation.

## How do I take letrozole?

- The starting dose of letrozole is 2.5mgs.
- The first day of your period is Day 1 of your cycle. Take your letrozole tablets from Day 2 to Day 6, even if your period is longer or shorter than this.
- If you spot for a day or two, ensure that it is a proper period before starting letrozole.
- When you commence your first letrozole cycle, telephone Torbay Fertility Clinic on 01803 654634 to book a scan.
- We will organise an ultrasound scan around Day 12 of your cycle to track your response to the medication and measure the size of your follicles and thickness of your endometrium.
- A Specialist Nurse will see you after your scan to explain the results and to plan a progesterone blood test at the appropriate time in your cycle (generally 7 days after ovulation).

## **What happens after the first month of treatment?**

If ovulation has not occurred, the letrozole dose will be increased. Most patients will ovulate with one or two tablets a day. Some patients may require higher doses and others may not ovulate at all. Under these circumstances alternative treatments will be discussed.

Once ovulation has been confirmed it is usual to continue on the same dose for the next six cycles. If a pregnancy has not occurred after 3 ovulatory cycles, then a tubal patency scan will be arranged.

## **What is letrozole prescribed for in fertility?**

Letrozole is generally prescribed for the following situations:

- Anovulation (irregular or absent cycles)
- Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome
- Poor response to clomifene
- Over-response to clomifene

## **What are the possible side effects?**

Generally, side effects are mild and not particularly troublesome. However, you may experience

- Mood swings
- Nausea and vomiting
- Breast tenderness
- Headache
- Blurred vision **STOP TREATMENT**
- Fatigue
- Muscle aches

Letrozole is a medication approved for the treatment of breast cancer.

Talk to your doctor before taking letrozole if you have severe liver or kidney disease.

## **Instructions for Ovarian Cycle Tracking**

Please contact Torbay Fertility Clinic weekdays between 09.00 and 16.00hrs on 01803 654634 as soon as possible after the start of your period once you commence letrozole, an appointment will be made on the 11 to 13<sup>th</sup> day of your cycle for an ultrasound scan.

The scan will be a transvaginal ultrasound scan of your endometrial lining and ovaries. You will need an empty bladder for this procedure.

**Treatment with letrozole is off license as the drug company has not applied for a specific license to allow for fertility treatment and is therefore not approved for ovulation induction. However, the use of letrozole for ovulation induction does appear to be safe and has been used in practice for several years**

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For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.

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