

Medical treatment

This consists of different types of hormone treatments and is aimed at relieving symptoms in particular those of pain. Drugs can take the form of pain relief medication or hormone manipulation.

Drugs affecting hormones drugs may:

- Bring about an improvement in the pain symptoms
- Shrink or slow down the progression of the condition
- Delay the recurrence of the disease
- Hormonal treatments may have side effects

Commonly used drugs include:

Progestogens

- Medroxyprogesterone (Provera)
- Norethisterone (Duphaston)

GnRH analogues

- Triptorelin (Gonapeptyl)
- Goserelin (Zoladex)
- Leuprorelin (Prostap)
- Nafarelin (Synarel)
- Buserelin (Suprecur)

Contraceptives

- Minipill (cerazette, cerelle, visanne)
- Combined oral contraceptive pill
- Mirena intra-uterine system (IUS)
- Depo-provera injection

It is important to avoid a pregnancy whilst receiving hormonal treatments. The Mirena system, Depo-provera, minipill and the oral contraceptive pill provide effective contraception. However, the other hormone treatments do not provide effective contraception cover and therefore you are advised to use alternative methods of contraception such as the barrier method whilst receiving these treatments.

Gonadotrophin Releasing Hormone Analogues (Gonapeptyl, Prostag or Zoladex)

These hormones (GnRHa) temporarily switch off the ovaries and virtually remove the production of oestrogen production. This results in a temporary but reversible menopause. This tends to cause shrinkage of endometriosis, as it is known to be oestrogen dependant. Lack of periods and shrinkage of endometriosis with these drugs tend to give an improvement of the symptoms. However, the condition tends to come back after the treatment is discontinued.

GnRHa may be used prior to surgery to shrink and reduce vascularity of endometriosis to facilitate surgery. They are sometimes used after or instead of surgery in selected patients. These drugs are usually given for two to six months and most women feel better during treatment. Sometimes drugs may be used for longer, but in such situations additional hormone replacement therapy is given to prevent osteoporosis and menopausal symptoms.

How are Gonapeptyl, Zoladex and Prostag administered?

Gonapeptyl, Zoladex and Prostag are given as an injection once a month. It is important that you are not pregnant when beginning treatment. These drugs do not provide effective contraception and therefore some form of barrier method must be used during treatment.

What are the main side effects?

Some women experience no side effects. Others may experience some of the following symptoms:

- Hot flushes
- Decreased sex drive (libido)
- Mood changes
- Breast changes
- Insomnia

These side effects generally reduce within a few weeks of completing treatment. With longer use osteoporosis may also occur.