

What is an adjuvant therapy?

Adjuvant therapy, also known as adjunct therapy, or 'add-ons', comprises a group of medical interventions that are given alone or in combination in addition to the standard IVF treatment. It is important to note that for many of these add-ons there is little or no evidence of their effectiveness to improve live birth rates. Nevertheless, your fertility specialist may decide to offer these treatments to individualise the care of your IVF treatment.

Monash IVF has made several fact sheets on add-ons to help you make a fully informed decision. Before you agree, you will need to weigh the evidence that this add-on may help you against the side effects it may cause, the known risks to mother and baby, as well as the extra costs.

Who may recommend an adjuvant therapy to you?

Your Fertility Specialist will discuss and recommend any adjuvant therapies they feel may be appropriate for the treatment you are going to undertake. If recommended, these therapies will be individualised to compliment your fertility treatment cycle.

Clexane

What is Clexane normally used for?

Clexane belongs to a group of drugs called anticoagulants. Clexane stops unwanted blood clots from forming and can stop any blood clots that have already formed from growing bigger. Clexane does NOT break down blood clots that have already formed. Clexane acts as a roadblock, interfering with the process of forming blood clots.

Why is Clexane used in IVF?

Some patients may be discovered to have a thrombophilia, which is a blood disorder increasing the tendency to clotting in the vascular bed of the early developing placenta. Clots in this bed of vessels can lead to failed implantation or miscarriage without treatment. Some of the thrombophilic disorders can be inherited (ie determined by the patients' genetic pattern) and some can be acquired (eg. some autoimmune disorders). There are many different thrombophilias and they have varying levels of evidence for their effects on implantation and miscarriage.

Will using Clexane increase my chance of success?

There are varying levels of evidence for the many different thrombophilias. In some cases, there are moderate levels of evidence that use of blood-thinning agents improves IVF success rates. There have been several meta-analyses published on this subject with some showing positive effects of Clexane use and some showing inconclusive results.

Is the use of Clexane in IVF an off-label prescription?

The use of Clexane in IVF in a patient without increased clotting risk is an off-label prescription. This means its use in IVF in such patients is not an authorised use of this medication.

Are there any side effects and risks with using Clexane?

Great care must be taken in taking Clexane prior to an egg collection procedure due to the risk of bleeding from the ovary after the egg collection. We usually advise NOT to take Clexane prior to the egg collection procedure except under exceptional circumstances.

Common side effects can include:

- bleeding gums
- coughing up blood

Common side effects continued:

- difficulty with breathing or swallowing
- dizziness
- headache
- increased menstrual flow or vaginal bleeding and prolonged bleeding from cuts
- nose bleeds
- paralysis
- red or black, tarry stools
- red or dark brown urine
- shortness of breath
- thrombocytopenia (low platelet count in 0.5-5.0% of persons treated for at least five days)

Are there any risks to the safety of a baby by using Clexane during pregnancy?

Clexane (Enoxaparin) is a pregnancy category C drug. Category C drugs are drugs which, owing to their pharmacological effects, have caused or may be suspected of causing, harmful effects on the human fetus or neonate without causing malformations. These effects may be reversible. It is important to note that Enoxaparin does not cross the placenta therefore it is unlikely an unborn baby would be exposed to it.

What are the costs?

Your Fertility Specialist will provide you with a prescription to obtain any medications which have been prescribed to you. The cost of these medications may vary from pharmacy to pharmacy, however these costs are in addition to your treatment cycle.

What do I do if I have more questions?

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact your Fertility Specialist.

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Potdar N et al. Adjunct low-molecular-weight heparin to improve live birth rate after recurrent implantation failure: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Human Reproduction Update, Vol19, Issue 6, November/December 2013, Pages 674–684,