
Ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome (OHSS)

Medisch Centrum Kinderwens

What is OHSS?

OHSS is a medical complication which may develop due to the use of hormones to stimulate the ovaries. The more follicles mature due to hormone stimulation, the higher the chances are of developing OHSS. OHSS may develop after the use of hCG (pregnancy hormone). This is used when undergoing an IVF or ICSI treatment. It is injected 35 hours before the ova retrieval is to take place. Ovitrelle® contains hCG. hCG may, following the retrieval, incite the production of a protein called VEGF which causes the walls of the veins around the ovaries to leak fluids. These fluids will drain into the abdominal cavity. In severe cases, thrombosis or an embolism may occur.

OHSS may first appear as soon as within a week (3-7 days) following the retrieval, although it has also been known to occur further down the line, 12 to 17 days after the injection. In that case, the likely catalyst is a pregnancy, which incites the production of hCG.

What are the symptoms of OHSS?

Defining features of OHSS are a swollen abdomen, abdominal pain, nausea, shortness of breath and weight gain.

Is OHSS preventable?

OHSS is not always preventable, but there are several ways to minimize your chances of developing OHSS. In some cases, this may mean that a treatment should be terminated for your health or, following the retrieval, that all embryos should be frozen rather than performing an embryo transfer.

Is OHSS a risk to pregnancy?

OHSS is not a risk in early pregnancy. However, pregnancy can worsen the symptoms of OHSS. In our clinic an infusion of fluid can be given if necessary. Anticoagulation is then also given to prevent thrombosis or embolism. Sometimes this requires admission to a hospital.

Cabercholine (Dostinex®)

If, after the egg retrieval, the risk of OHSS is estimated to be high, the doctor may decide to prescribe Cabercholine. This does not reduce the risk of OHSS, but may make the symptoms less severe. You will take 1 tablet a day for 8 days. This medicine can cause nausea, abdominal pain, headaches and dizziness.

Please note: You must not drive while taking Cabercholine!

Please take note

If you have (a heightened risk of) OHSS, please take note of the following:

- Take it easy, this is important.
- Drink at least two liters of water a day.
- Monitor your weight closely.
- If you're in pain, you may take Paracetamol but no other painkillers!

When should you contact us?

If you experience OHSS symptoms, please contact the MCK Fertility Center as soon as possible. If symptoms worsen or you experience weight gain of over 1kg a day, you need to call us. It may be necessary to do an ultrasound or blood tests.

Phone numbers for severe physical complaints

Telephone: 071 5812300 (MO-FRI 08:00 a.m.- 12:00 a.m. and 01:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m.
SA and SUN: 10:00 a.m.-01:00 p.m.)

After hours: 06 – 252574200

This information is meant for women with a heightened risk of OHSS. This information may be subject to change.

If you have any feedback regarding this information brochure, please let us know at info_mckinderwens@tfp-fertility.com.