



C-Obs 22

Use of prostaglandins for cervical ripening prior to the induction of labour

Introductory Comments

Vaginal prostaglandin E2 has been shown to be efficacious in ripening the cervix prior to the induction of labour. The likelihood of delivery within 24 hours is increased although there appears to be no significant change in the Caesarean section rate. (1)

There is however evidence for increased rates of uterine hyperstimulation with fetal heart rate changes (4.6% v. 0.15%, RR4.14, 13 trials, 1203 women). (1)

Less data are available for oral misoprostol or vaginal misoprostol but both appear to be efficacious with uncertainty regarding safety. (2, 3)

Recommendations

- a. *The decision to use Prostaglandins for Cervical Ripening prior to the induction of labour must consider both the potential benefits and the side effects.*
- b. *All maternity units that use prostaglandins for cervical ripening prior to induction of labour should have protocols in place that define:*
 - i. *Dose regimen(s), including time between doses*
 - ii. *Fetal surveillance recommendations*
 - iii. *Duration and place of observation*
 - iv. *Management of subsequent labour including syntocinon regimen*
 - v. *Management of Uterine Hyperstimulation should such occur*
- c. *Such protocols may vary recommended treatment on the basis of:*
 - i. *Favourability of the cervix (cervical or Bishop's score)*
 - ii. *Parity of the woman*
 - iii. *Indication for Induction of Labour and likelihood of fetal maternal compromise with the onset of labour*
 - iv. *Other clinical circumstance*

References

1. Vaginal prostaglandin (PGE2 and PGF2a) for induction of labour at term. Kelly A, Kavanagh J, & Thomas J. 2006. The Cochrane Library.
<http://www.cochrane.org/reviews/en/ab003101.html>

2. Oral misoprostol for induction of labour. Alfirevic Z, Weeks A. 2006 The Cochrane Library. <http://www.cochrane.org/reviews/en/ab001338.html>
3. Vaginal misoprostol for cervical ripening and induction of labour. Hofmeyr GJ, Gulmezoglu AM. 2006. The Cochrane Library. <http://www.cochrane.org/reviews/en/ab000941.html>

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