

Delaying menstruation during holidays.

Norethisterone 5mg tds, started 3 days before the expected menses can be used for the postponement of menstruation and is often prescribed prior to a holiday. The effectiveness of the delay varies between individuals.

So what is the problem?

A review article in the Journal of Family Planning and Reproductive healthcare (Mansour 2012) highlighted that owing to the specific structure of norethisterone, it is partly metabolised to ethinyl oestradiol. Chu et al 2007 suggested that a daily dose of norethisterone 5mg tds might be equivalent to taking 20-30mcg combined oral contraceptive pill. Therefore, prescribing therapeutic doses of norethisterone for women with significant risk factors for venous thromboembolism (VTE) may therefore be inappropriate.

Who shouldn't be given norethisterone?

- Obese
- Personal h/o VTE
- Strong FH of VTE
- Immobile/wheelchair bound
- Carriers of thrombophilia
- Any other condition predisposing to VTE

If my patient can't take norethisterone, what are the alternatives?

The metabolism to ethinyl oestradiol occurs with doses of norethisterone 5mg and over and therefore, the concern does not apply to or other progestogens or contraceptive pills containing norethisterone. Mansour suggested Medroxyprogesterone (MPA) 10mg three times a day to reduce heavy menstrual bleeding. Dr Sarah Grey (personal communication) recommends 20mg medroxyprogesterone to be taken daily, starting 3 days before the expected onset of menses. However, (MPA) is not licensed for this use and the prescriber should follow the rules of off label prescribing.

References

Safer prescribing of therapeutic norethisterone for women at risk of venous thromboembolism. Mansour JFPRHC July 2012

Formation of ethinyl oestradiol in women during treatment with norethisterone acetate. Chu 2007 June 1992 J Clinical Endocrinological Metabolsim

Sexual health Lecture Royal Bournemouth Hospital May 2015. Dr Sarah Grey GP Specialist in Women's health Primary Care Lead for Sexual Health Cornwall.

6/2015

Approved by DMAG July 2015