

# Specialists In Reproductive Medicine & Surgery, P.A.

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## Human Chorionic Gonadotropin (HCG) *Patient Information*

### Definition:

Human Chorionic Gonadotropin, **HCG**, is a hormone produced by the placenta. It is the same hormone that home pregnancy tests examine to confirm that a woman is pregnant. HCG is sold under the brand names Profasi, Novarel, Pregnyl and Ovidrel.

### Anatomy/Physiology:

The HCG molecule is made up of two main segments. One segment of the HCG molecule is similar in structure to Luteinizing Hormone (**LH**). The LH surge is the signal that triggers the release of the egg from the ovary. Many women who are undergoing ovulation induction may not release their own LH surge or the physician will want to time procedures, such as insemination or in vitro fertilization, more accurately by simulating the actual LH surge. HCG is close enough in shape to LH to fool the ovary into thinking that a real LH surge has taken place stimulating the ovary to release the egg about 24 to 36 hours later.

### Indications:

HCG is given to women to simulate the LH surge and induce ovulation. The medication may also be given to particular men with pituitary deficiencies to stimulate sperm production. The medication is also given to infant boys to stimulate the descent of an undescended testicle.

### Contraindications:

HCG should not be used with males with early puberty or prostate problems. An allergy to HCG is exceedingly rare, but is also a contraindication to taking the medication.

### Administration:

The medication is administered by injection. Five thousand, 10,000 International Units (IU's) or 250 mcg are usually dissolved in about 1 to 1.25 cc of diluent (this may be different than what the package insert states) and injected in a site and at a time designated by your physician. Any remaining HCG may be mixed, placed in the syringe and refrigerated for up to 60 days. If you have been prescribed Ovidrel, no mixing will be required. Please see our written patient information form for **Mixing and Injecting HCG**.

### Complications:

Headache, irritability, restlessness, depression, fatigue, swelling, early puberty, breast development in the male and pain at the injection sites are rare complications of the drug. Since this medication is the same as a hormone that is naturally produced by the human body, it has relatively few side effects.

### Common Questions:

#### **How soon can I check a pregnancy test after taking the medication?**

It takes about 10 days for the HCG to clear from the system, so a pregnancy test should not be done any earlier than this 10-day period. Your physician will instruct you as to when a pregnancy test should be obtained.

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