Treatment for Preeclampsia

Preeclampsia is also called “toxemia”, high blood pressure of pregnancy or PIH (pregnancy induced hypertension). Treatment is available. Our goal is to have a healthy mom and a healthy baby.

The Need for Treatment

If you have been admitted to the hospital, the goal is to control your blood pressure. Your condition will improve following the delivery of your baby.

- **Medicines:**

  These medicines are used to prevent the problems that preeclampsia can cause.

  - **Magnesium Sulfate:** This medicine is used to prevent seizures which can happen from the high blood pressure. It is given to you through an IV. The medicine is given until you are stable, until you deliver, and then possibly for 24 hours after delivery. Please stay in bed while on this medicine. You may have one or more of these signs:
    - Hot, tired and weak
    - Heaviness in your arms and legs
    - Nausea and vomiting
    - Less alert, drowsiness
    - Confusion, memory problems
  
  - **Betamethasone:** This medicine is a steroid. It helps the baby’s lungs to mature faster if an early delivery is needed. You will be given two shots, the first after admission and the second shot 24 hours later.

More on next page ➔

Learn more about your health care.

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- **Hydralazine/Labetalol:** These medicines are used to lower your blood pressure. It is put into your IV. You may have dizziness if you move suddenly. Try to move slowly.

- **Other Treatments:**
  - **Fetal monitoring:** A fetal ultrasound may be done to show the movement, heart rate and position of the baby. You will also stay on a monitor to show your baby’s heart rate.
  - **Foley catheter:** You may need a foley catheter to drain your urine.
  - **Bed rest:** You may be placed on bed rest to help lower your blood pressure. You may be asked to wear pulsating boots around your legs to prevent blood clots from forming.
  - **Nothing to eat or drink.** You may not be able to eat or drink during this time. You may be able to have ice chips, and your nurse will discuss this with you.

- **Tests:**
  - **Vital signs:** Every hour while receiving magnesium you will be checked for:
    - Blood pressure
    - Pulse
    - Reflexes
    - Temperature
    - Breathing
  - **Blood tests:** Blood tests may be done every 4 hours.
  - **Weight:** Sometimes, there is swelling with preeclampsia so your weight may be checked daily.

Sometimes these treatments do not work to control your blood pressure. If this happens you will be prepared for an early delivery. Your baby may be sleepy from the medicines you have received.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.