

Recommendations related to contraception and pregnancy testing in clinical trials

Introduction and scope

The aim of this document is to supplement existing guidelines related to embryofetal risk mitigation and to provide practical guidance on contraception use and pregnancy testing in clinical trials. It is not the aim of this document to discuss when women of childbearing potential may be included in clinical trials or to discuss treatment of pregnant women with investigational medicinal products (IMPs) in clinical trials. In this guidance document it is assumed that treatment with the IMP will be interrupted in case of pregnancy. For this reason the relevant data for risk assessment cover risks in the early stages of pregnancy only. The recommendations in this document are intended for sponsors of clinical trials seeking to meet regulatory expectations for submission of application dossiers for clinical trials with IMPs in accordance with Directive 2001/20/EC. Deviations from these recommendations should be justified by the sponsor. This guidance applies to all IMPs, with the exception of advanced therapy medicinal products (ATMP). For ATMP products, embryofetal risk assessment and the need for contraception and pregnancy testing recommendations should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

This document should be read in conjunction with the published guidelines and in particular the following:

- Non-Clinical Safety Studies for the Conduct of Human Clinical Trials and Marketing Authorization for Pharmaceuticals (ICH M3 (R2)), EMA/CPMP/ICH/286/95
- Preclinical Safety Evaluation of Biotechnology-derived Pharmaceuticals (ICH S6 (R1)), EMA/CHMP/ICH/731268/1998
- Nonclinical Evaluation for Anticancer Pharmaceuticals (ICH S9), EMA/CHMP/ICH/646107/08
- Guidance on Genotoxicity Testing and Data Interpretation for Pharmaceuticals Intended for Human Use (ICH S2 (R1)), EMEA/CHMP/ICH/126642/2008
- General Considerations for Clinical Trials (ICH E8), CPMP/ICH/291/95
- Clinical Investigation of Medicinal Products in the Paediatric Population (ICH E11), CPMP/ICH/2711/99
- Guideline on Risk Assessment of Medicinal Products on Human Reproduction and Lactation: from Data to Labelling, EMEA/CHMP/203927/2005
- Guideline on the Summary of Product Characteristics – SmPC (September 2009). In EUDRALEX – Volume 2C - Regulatory Guidelines in Notice to applicants and regulatory guidelines for medicinal products for human use

Clinical Trial Facilitation Group

CTFG

- Guideline for Good Clinical Practice (ICH E6), CPMP/ICH/135/95
- Note for Guidance on Development Safety Update Reports (ICH E2F), EMA/CHMP/ICH/309348/2008
- U.S. Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive Use, 2010; Adapted from the World Health Organization (WHO) May 28, 2010 / Vol. 59” – with special regard to table 1
- Guideline on the Exposure to Medicinal Products during Pregnancy: Need for Post-Authorisation Data, EMEA/CHMP/313666/2005
- Guideline on the Investigation of Drug Interactions, CPMP/EWP/560/95/Rev.1 Corr.
- U.S. Selected Practice Recommendations for Contraceptive Use, 2013
- Guideline on Strategies to Identify and Mitigate Risks for First-in-Human Clinical Trials with Investigational Medicinal Products, EMEA/CHMP/SWP/28367/07
- Assessment and Control of DNA Reactive (Mutagenic) Impurities in Pharmaceuticals to Limit Potential Carcinogenic Risk (ICH M7, Step 3)

Main text

1 Definitions

1.1 Definition of women of childbearing potential and of fertile men

For the purpose of this document, a woman is considered of childbearing potential (WOCBP), i.e. fertile, following menarche and until becoming post-menopausal unless permanently sterile. Permanent sterilisation methods include hysterectomy, bilateral salpingectomy and bilateral oophorectomy.

A postmenopausal state is defined as no menses for 12 months without an alternative medical cause. A high follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) level in the postmenopausal range may be used to confirm a post-menopausal state in women not using hormonal contraception or hormonal replacement therapy. However in the absence of 12 months of amenorrhea, a single FSH measurement is insufficient.

For the purpose of this document, a man is considered fertile after puberty unless permanently sterile by bilateral orchidectomy.

1.2 Definition of end of relevant systemic exposure

For the purpose of this document the end of relevant systemic exposure is defined as the time point where the IMP, including any active or major metabolites, has decreased to a concentration that is no longer considered relevant for human teratogenicity/fetotoxicity. In case reproductive toxicity studies are available, this systemic exposure level should include a sufficient exposure margin to the no-observed adverse effect level (NOAEL) in the non-clinical reproductive toxicity studies. In the absence of reproductive toxicity studies, such considerations may be based on the principles of a minimal anticipated biological effect level (MABEL) or other accepted principles. In case of a genotoxic IMP the principle of threshold of toxicological concern (TTC) should be considered.

2 How to proceed from risk assessment to practical contraception recommendations

2.1 Risk Assessment

2.1.1 IMPs with Marketing Authorisation

In case of clinical trials with authorised IMPs, the appropriate labelling (the SmPC, for medicinal products approved in the EU) should be reviewed when assessing contraception recommendations. In case of existing contraception recommendations, these should form the basis for the contraception recommendation with the IMP, but their relevance for the specific clinical trial needs to be assessed and justified by the applicant. In case of no contraception recommendations, the principles for IMPs without marketing authorisation (MA) should be applied.

2.1.2 IMPs without Marketing Authorisation

In case of clinical trials with IMPs that have not yet received MA, there is usually limited or no information about the outcome of pregnancies in humans following in utero or gonadal exposure. Depending on the stage of clinical development there may also be limited or no information from non-clinical reproduction toxicity studies.

The general recommendation in the ICH M3(R2) guideline is that “all female reproduction toxicity studies and the standard battery of genotoxicity tests should be completed prior to the inclusion, in any clinical trial, of WOCBP not using highly effective birth control or whose pregnancy status is unknown”.

The following non-clinical toxicological studies for risk assessment during preconception and early stages of pregnancy are considered necessary in order to allow a conclusion that non-clinical toxicological studies do not indicate a risk to the unborn that would necessitate the requirement for highly effective methods of contraception in clinical trials (the timings of these studies are included in the appropriate guidelines):

- A standard battery of genotoxicity testing (if applicable)
- Repeated dose toxicity of adequate duration
- Embryofetal development
- Fertility and early embryonic development

Clinical Trial Facilitation Group

CTFG

Given that it is assumed that treatment with the IMP will be interrupted in case of pregnancy, the pre- and postnatal development study is not considered necessary for assessment of risk to the unborn, except for IMPs with exceptionally long half-lives. Since the focus of this guidance is on the early stages of pregnancy, the main concern relates to evidence of teratogenicity.

Risk assessment should be based on all relevant available non-clinical and clinical data, including pharmacology and pharmacokinetic data, in accordance with the CHMP “Guideline on risk assessment of medicinal products on human reproduction and lactation: from data to labelling”. In order to specify the duration of the risk mitigation measures after discontinuation of treatment with the IMP, the risk assessment should include an estimation of the end of relevant systemic exposure (see section 1.2).

In the present guidance document the following three main risk categories for the early stages of pregnancy have been adapted from the risk categories set in table 1 of the above CHMP guideline:

- Demonstrated or suspected human teratogenicity/fetotoxicity in early pregnancy
- Possible human teratogenicity/fetotoxicity in early pregnancy
- Unlikely human teratogenicity/fetotoxicity in early pregnancy

In case of insufficient or unavailable non-clinical data, the impact on the risk categorization should be evaluated. Unavailable or insufficient non-clinical data should be considered as “effects detected”, and the highest possible risk category assumed.

Genotoxicity / genetic damage at the level of the germ cells and/or conceptus may deserve particular attention due to its potential irreversible nature. If genotoxic effects take place in the germ cells that are undergoing or completing meiosis (spermatocytes, preovulatory oocytes), but not in the primordial spermatogonia or in the oocytes that are arrested in the first meiotic prophase, such effects may be considered reversible in the sense that new spermatocytes or arrested oocytes are unaffected. It is recommended that as a minimum one sperm cycle (here defined as 90 days) or menstruation cycle (here defined as 30 days) should be awaited after the relevant systemic exposure to the medicinal product has ended (see section 1.2).

Concerning the embryo-fetal risk posed from treatment of male subjects with IMPs capable of provoking embryo-fetal harm, there is a theoretical risk of human teratogenicity/fetotoxicity in a pregnant WOCBP partner through exposure to the ejaculate. Exposure levels in the WOCBP partner are, however, much smaller from exposure to semen compared with direct intake of the IMP by the WOCBP. Estimated exposure levels in WOCBP are three or more orders of magnitude lower than the plasma concentrations in the male subject (Klemmt & Scialli, The Transport of Chemicals in Semen. Birth Defects Research 2005; 74: 119-31).

A concern may, therefore, only apply to IMPs with demonstrated or suspected human teratogenicity/fetotoxicity in the early pregnancy (see section 2.2.2) at sub-therapeutic systemic exposure levels.

2.2 Birth Control and Pregnancy Testing Recommendations for WOCBP

2.2.1 General considerations

WOCBP should only be included after a confirmed menstrual period and a negative highly sensitive urine or serum pregnancy test, except for IMPs where an absence of risk of human teratogenicity/fetotoxicity in early pregnancy can be justified by human pregnancy data.

The recommendations below, with respect to contraception and pregnancy testing, are provided in relation to the risk categories that have been adapted from the “Guideline on risk assessment of medicinal products on human reproduction and lactation: from data to labelling”, and concern both authorized and unauthorized IMPs.

2.2.2 Contraception and pregnancy testing recommendations for IMPs with demonstrated or suspected human teratogenicity/fetotoxicity in early pregnancy

This refers to IMPs where a malformative effect has been demonstrated in humans or is suspected on the basis of class effects, IMPs with genotoxic potential, or IMPs where there is a strong suspicion of human teratogenicity/fetotoxicity in early pregnancy based on non-clinical data.

- The inclusion of WOCBP requires use of a highly effective contraceptive measure (see sections 4.1 and 4.3). Contraception methods with low user dependency (see section 4.1, footnote 2) should preferably be used, in particular when contraception is introduced as a result of participation in the clinical trial.
- Additional pregnancy testing should be performed at monthly intervals.
- The above mentioned risk mitigation measures (contraception and pregnancy testing) should be maintained during treatment and until the end of relevant systemic exposure (see section 1.2). This period should be extended by 30 days in case of genotoxicity (see section 2.1.2).

2.2.3 Contraception and pregnancy testing recommendations for IMPs with possible human teratogenicity/fetotoxicity in early pregnancy

This refers to IMPs, where human data on pregnancies is limited or not available, there is no suspicion of human teratogenicity based on class effects or genotoxic potential, and non-clinical reproductive toxicity studies of relevance for early human pregnancy show positive findings that do not generate a strong suspicion of human teratogenicity/fetotoxicity.

Clinical Trial Facilitation Group

CTFG

- The inclusion of WOCBP requires use of a highly effective contraceptive measure (see sections 4.1 and 4.3). Contraception should be maintained during treatment and until the end of relevant systemic exposure (see section 1.2).
- Additional pregnancy testing should be considered taking into account, amongst others, the duration of the trial. As a minimum, a pregnancy test should be performed at the end of relevant systemic exposure.
- In each case of delayed menstrual period (over one month between menstruations) confirmation of absence of pregnancy is strongly recommended. This recommendation also applies to WOCBP with infrequent or irregular menstrual cycles.

2.2.4 Contraception and pregnancy testing recommendations for IMPs with unlikely human teratogenicity/fetotoxicity in early pregnancy

This refers to IMPs where assessment of the completed necessary non-clinical studies (see section 2.1.2) does not indicate teratogenicity/fetotoxicity in early pregnancy and human data are not available or do not contradict these findings or there is already sufficient evidence for lack of risk based on human data.

- The inclusion of WOCBP is possible using at least an acceptable effective contraceptive measure unless an absence of risk of human teratogenicity/fetotoxicity in early pregnancy can be justified by human pregnancy data (see sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 for methods considered acceptable and section 4.4 for methods considered unacceptable). As a minimum contraception should be maintained until treatment discontinuation.
- Unless a woman is suspected to have become pregnant, additional pregnancy testing during the clinical trial is not necessary.

2.2.5 Other factors to consider

The choice of contraceptive methods for WOCBP and the frequency of pregnancy testing may need to be adapted to special circumstances, which should be justified by the sponsor. Factors to consider when adapting the need for a specific clinical trial may include e.g. exposure to IMP, study duration, fertility of study population, and seriousness of the treated medical condition.

2.3 Recommendations for male subjects with pregnant or non-pregnant WOCBP partner

For IMPs with possible or unlikely risk of human teratogenicity/fetotoxicity in early pregnancy (see sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.4), no contraception measures are needed for male subjects with pregnant or non-pregnant WOCBP partner. Also for non-genotoxic IMPs with demonstrated, or suspected human teratogenicity/fetotoxicity in early pregnancy (see section 2.2.2), only at therapeutic or suprathreshold systemic exposure levels, no contraception measures are needed. For non-genotoxic IMPs with demonstrated or suspected human teratogenicity/fetotoxicity (see section 2.2.2) in early pregnancy, at subtherapeutic systemic exposure levels, where it is theoretically possible that relevant systemic concentrations may be achieved in WOCBP from exposure to seminal fluid, male contraception (condom) is recommended in order to avoid exposure of an existing embryo/fetus. Contraception should be continued until the end of relevant systemic exposure in WOCBP (see section 1.2).

For genotoxic IMPs, the male subject should use condom during treatment and until the end of relevant systemic exposure in the male subject (see section 1.2), plus a further 90-day period (see section 2.1.2). For a non-pregnant WOCBP partner, contraception recommendations should also be considered.

3 Provision of information in the IB/appropriate label and trial protocol

3.1 Information to be provided in the IB/appropriate label

For clinical trials with IMPs that have not yet received MA the analysis of embryofetal risk should be provided in the Investigator's Brochure (IB). The "Summary of data and guidance for the investigator", or equivalent section as part of the reference safety information should contain the above mentioned risk assessment (see section 2.1) and the recommendations for the level of contraception and frequency of pregnancy testing (see sections 2.2 and 2.3). The information should be sufficiently detailed to indicate the duration of the need for contraceptive measures and pregnancy testing.

Regarding the content of this information, reference is made to the SmPC guideline. For clinical trials with authorised IMPs the SmPC is the basis for the analysis of embryofetal risk (see section 2.1.1).

Where hormonal contraception methods are recommended birth control methods, assessment should be made of the likelihood of possible interaction with IMP (see section 4.3).

3.2 Information to be provided in the trial protocol

The specific recommendations for contraception and pregnancy testing for a clinical trial in the study protocol should be adequate in relation to the information provided in the IB/appropriate label and any other factors to consider. They should encompass all IMPs as well as non-investigational medicinal products, e.g. background therapy and the measures to be followed should be based on the medicinal product with highest risk. The study protocol should contain detailed information on the level of contraception and the possibility for an interaction between the IMP or the non-investigational medicinal products and hormonal contraceptives, the frequency of pregnancy testing, and the duration of the need for contraceptive measures and pregnancy testing. The need for sexual counseling of study subjects, e.g. in adolescents, should be reflected in the protocol.

4 Birth control methods

4.1 Birth control methods which may be considered as highly effective

For the purpose of this guidance, methods that can achieve a failure rate of less than 1% per year when used consistently and correctly are considered as highly effective birth control methods. Such methods include:

- combined (estrogen and progestogen containing) hormonal contraception associated with inhibition of ovulation ¹:
 - oral
 - intravaginal
 - transdermal
- progestogen-only hormonal contraception associated with inhibition of ovulation ¹:
 - oral
 - injectable
 - implantable ²
- intrauterine device (IUD) ²
- intrauterine hormone-releasing system (IUS) ²
- bilateral tubal occlusion ²
- vasectomised partner ^{2,3}
- sexual abstinence ⁴

¹ Hormonal contraception may be susceptible to interaction with the IMP, which may reduce the efficacy of the contraception method (see section 4.3).

² Contraception methods that in the context of this guidance are considered to have low user dependency.

³ Vasectomised partner is a highly effective birth control method provided that partner is the sole sexual partner of the WOCBP trial participant and that the vasectomised partner has received medical assessment of the surgical success.

⁴ In the context of this guidance sexual abstinence is considered a highly effective method only if defined as refraining from heterosexual intercourse during the entire period of risk associated with the study treatments. The reliability of sexual abstinence needs to be evaluated in relation to the duration of the clinical trial and the preferred and usual lifestyle of the subject.

4.2 Acceptable birth control methods which may not be considered as highly effective

Acceptable birth control methods that result in a failure rate of more than 1% per year include:

- progestogen-only oral hormonal contraception, where inhibition of ovulation is not the primary mode of action
- male or female condom with or without spermicide ⁵
- cap, diaphragm or sponge with spermicide ⁵

⁵ A combination of male condom with either cap, diaphragm or sponge with spermicide (double barrier methods) are also considered acceptable, but not highly effective, birth control methods

4.3 Assessment of pharmacokinetic interaction between the IMP and hormonal contraceptives and recommendations on the use of hormonal contraceptives

For hormonal contraception methods, caution should be taken to possible interaction with a (non-biologic) IMP. Interaction with the IMP leading to reduced efficacy of the hormonal contraception method can occur due to e.g. increased metabolism (enzyme induction).

A potential human teratogen needs to be studied *in vivo* for effects on contraceptive steroids if the drug is intended for use in fertile women, regardless on the *in vitro* induction study results (see Guideline on the Investigation of Drug Interactions). For the purpose of this guidance, an IMP with demonstrated or suspected human teratogenicity/fetotoxicity in early pregnancy (see section 2.2.2) is a potential human teratogen. For these IMPs, data from a clinical pharmacokinetic interaction study between the IMP and contraceptive steroids, if available, allow to conclude whether the efficacy of hormonal contraception is reduced. In the absence of such a clinical pharmacokinetic interaction study, any recommendation for use of hormonal contraceptives should be thoroughly justified by the sponsor.

Clinical Trial Facilitation Group

CTFG

For all other IMPs, recommendations should take into account both the evidence of the non-clinical reproductive toxicity data and available information related to the potential risk for interaction, e.g. in vitro enzyme induction results, signs of autoinduction and results from clinical interaction studies.

As a general rule, use of hormonal contraception is not recommended if a clinically relevant interaction with contraceptive steroids has been observed or is suspected. If an interaction with contraceptive steroids has been observed or is suspected, but the effect is considered to be of limited clinical significance, the hormonal contraception method must be supplemented with a barrier method (preferably male condom).

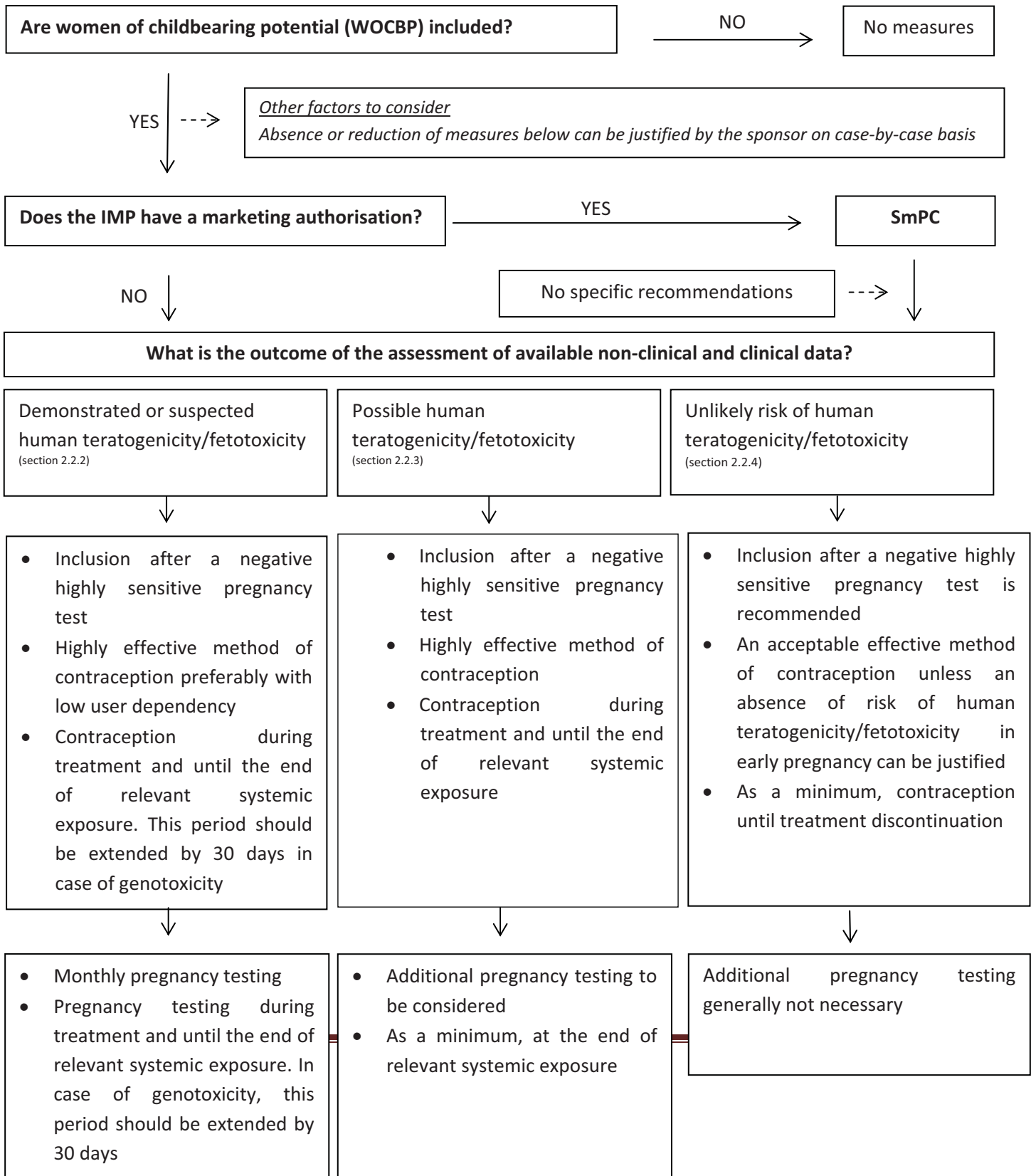
An assessment of the potential for interaction between the IMP and hormonal contraceptives should be provided in the IB, including a scientific rationale for the use of hormonal contraception methods with or without a supplementary barrier method (preferably male condom).

4.4 Birth control methods which are considered unacceptable in clinical trials

Periodic abstinence (calendar, symptothermal, post-ovulation methods), withdrawal (coitus interruptus), spermicides only, and lactational amenorrhoea method (LAM) are not acceptable methods of contraception. Female condom and male condom should not be used together.

Decision Trees - Recommendations Related to Contraception and Pregnancy Testing in Clinical Trials

Women of Childbearing Potential (WOCBP)



Males with WOCBP Partners

