What is OHSS?

Ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome (OHSS) is a complication of fertility treatment. Fertility drugs stimulate the ovaries to produce many egg sacs (follicles). In 0.5-5% of cases there is an excessive response to these fertility drugs which causes OHSS.

In OHSS certain factors are released from the swollen ovaries into the bloodstream. These make the blood vessels leakier, allowing fluid and protein from the blood to leak into areas such as into the skin, around the bowels and on the outside of the lungs. This causes the symptoms that you may be experiencing. When the fluid moves out of the blood vessels it makes the blood stickier and you feel dehydrated. A major part of the care that we will provide will include ensuring you are well hydrated by delivering fluids via a drip and using treatments to thin the blood and prevent any clots forming in your blood vessels.

OHSS is categorised as mild, moderate or severe according to your symptoms.

What are the signs and symptoms of OHSS?

- A tense bloated abdomen due to the swollen ovaries and any fluid that has leaked around the bowels making you feel uncomfortable
- Reduced urine due to dehydration
- Nausea, reflux or vomiting
- Difficulty lying flat due to the bloating and shortness of breath due to the pushing from your bloated abdomen and/or fluid around your lungs

How is OHSS diagnosed?

There is no specific test that can diagnose OHSS. A diagnosis is made on the basis of your symptoms and a clinical assessment. This will include:

- Examining you to determine whether there is any fluid in your lungs, chest or abdomen.
- An initial abdominal ultrasound to measure the size of your ovaries and to establish whether there is any extra fluid in your abdomen.
- Regular blood tests to measure the fluid and protein loss from your blood and to determine how concentrated your blood is and how well your kidneys and liver are working.

What happens next?

- If your symptoms are mild you may be admitted to the Macquarie ward for observation.
- If your symptoms have progressed to moderate you will need to be monitored more closely and managed within the Acute Care Centre. When your condition has improved you will be sent to Macquarie ward or home.

What are the treatments and preventions in OHSS management?

There is no treatment that can reverse OHSS. OHSS will get better with time. The management of OHSS is to help alleviate symptoms and prevent complications. Management includes:

- Pain relief medications
- Anti-reflux and anti-nausea drugs to help reduce nausea and vomiting
- An intravenous drip with fluid and protein to replace the lost fluid
- Oxygen via a mask or nasal tubing
Ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome

- High protein drinks such as Ensure or Sustagen.
- Support stockings or calf compressors and daily injections to prevent clot formation.
- An indwelling catheter may be placed into your bladder to measure your urine output.

A procedure known as a paracentesis may be needed if your abdomen is very tense and swollen because of the fluid build-up. This is when a thin needle or tube is inserted into the abdomen, under local anaesthetic, to remove some of the fluid which is making you feel uncomfortable.

Monitoring and Care in Acute Care Centre

You will be supported and monitored very closely by the medical and nursing teams within Acute Care Centre. The care will include:

- Daily review by various medical teams.
- Daily measurement of your weight and waist before breakfast and inspection of your abdomen to determine whether fluid is increasing or decreasing.
- A blood test each morning.
- Your temperature, heart rate respiratory rate and blood pressure are taken regularly.
- We will assist you to use a “triflow” each hour. This is a special tool which helps you take bigger breaths.
- We will accurately record all your oral and intravenous input and record the amount of urine you are passing.
- Calf compressors will be placed on your lower legs which massage them while you are in bed.
- Nursing you on a special comfy air mattress and getting you to move as much as possible.
- A physiotherapist will help you get up and walk and will also assist with your breathing exercises. As soon as you are feeling well enough we will encourage you to walk as much as you feel you are able to.
- In addition you will be provided with emotional support and counselling as needed as it is normal to experience a range of emotions from high to low with positive and negative feelings during your hospitalisation. Be assured that these will normally pass with time.

How long does OHSS last?

- If you have mild OHSS your symptoms should usually resolve in a few days.
- If you have moderate to severe OHSS you may need to stay in hospital approximately 7-10 days.

Will I need any care further care after discharge?

You may need to go home on daily blood thinning injections and oral protein supplements. You will continue to see your usual Doctors after discharge. If you have any further questions the Doctors, Nurses and Midwives will be happy to answer them.