



Patient Information

Methotrexate for managing ectopic pregnancy

Ectopic Pregnancy

You have been diagnosed as having an ectopic pregnancy - that is a pregnancy growing outside the womb. This is a potentially dangerous condition that may need urgent treatment as it can cause internal bleeding.

The ectopic pregnancy can be removed by surgery (which may involve taking away part of your fallopian tube) or treated with an injection called Methotrexate. This is dependent on the scan findings and the size of the ectopic pregnancy, plus your pregnancy hormone levels (Bhcg). Methotrexate given at an early stage of pregnancy is successful in 9 out of 10 women. It avoids an operation and preserves the fallopian tube. 1 in 10 women who have Methotrexate will still require surgery as the ectopic pregnancy continues to grow.

How does Methotrexate work?

Methotrexate works by stopping cells from multiplying so that the placenta stops working. Side effects are rare and are unlikely to happen after a single dose, but include mouth ulcers, nausea and sickness, tiredness and effects the blood and liver.

How do you know it has worked?

Follow up is essential. You will need to have blood tests to measure the pregnancy hormone level and possibly a scan. You will need to have a blood test twice a week initially and then once a week until your pregnancy has resolved. Prolonged follow up for at least a month is required until the pregnancy hormone (Bhcg) is below 10 iu/l. This is because there is a risk of rupture by the ectopic pregnancy until the pregnancy hormone level falls below 10 iu/l.

If the pregnancy hormone level does not fall as anticipated, further treatment may be necessary. This can involve a second injection or surgery depending on the individual situation.



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After Methotrexate treatment:

You are likely to have some bleeding which may last several days you may have abdominal pain which usually occurs on days 3 – 7 after the injection. You can take paracetamol or co-codamol. You should stay off work for as long as the clinician advises, usually 2 weeks. You will be seen in the Early Pregnancy Unit (EPU) twice a week for a blood test. The blood test results are usually ready 2 – 3 hours after they have been taken. You will be asked to contact the EPU for your results.

If you experience abdominal pain, faintness, or heavy bleeding you must seek medical help at once. If any of these occur please contact the EPU/EGU **01793 605257**.

Can I fall pregnant again?

After methotrexate treatment, you must not get pregnant again for 3 months.

This is because the growing fetus is at risk from exposure to methotrexate and might not form or develop correctly.

You can get advice on contraception from a health care professional in the EPU. The outlook for pregnancy in the future is usually very good. However you are at increased risk of having further ectopic pregnancies. It is important that you have an ultrasound scan at 6 – 7 weeks into your next pregnancies to ensure that the pregnancy is correctly positioned in the womb.

If you require any further support or advice:

EPU/EGU: 01793 605257

The Ectopic Trust:

<http://www.ectopic.org.uk>

Phone Helpline: 020 7733 2653

E Mail: ept@ectopic.org.uk



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From 1st January 2019 smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds.

This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email gwh.pals@nhs.net

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