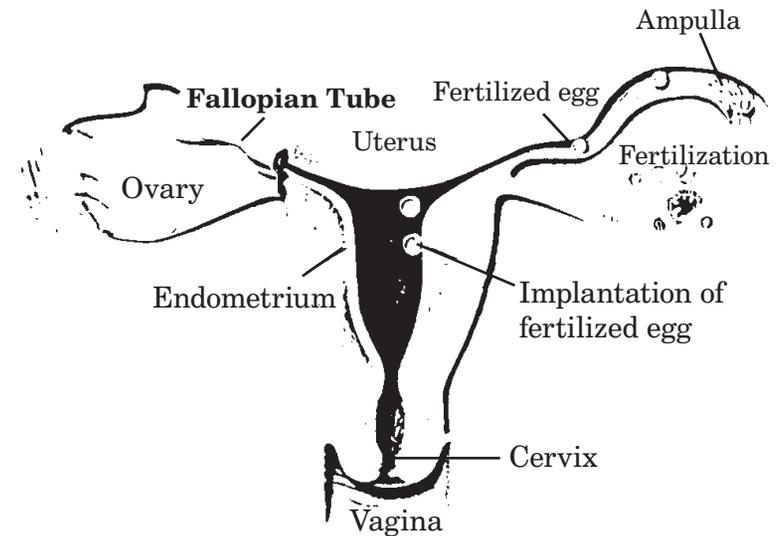


Ectopic Pregnancy

What Is An Ectopic Pregnancy?

An ectopic pregnancy occurs when a fertilized egg (embryo) grows outside the uterus. Most ectopic pregnancies happen in the fallopian tube, but they can also rarely occur in the ovary, the abdomen or the cervix.

Female Reproductive System



How Do I Know I Have An Ectopic Pregnancy?

The diagnosis of ectopic pregnancy is **suspected** if:

- You are pregnant
- **And** have some bleeding
- You may or may not have pain

Not all pregnant patients who have bleeding or pain have an ectopic pregnancy. You will need additional tests.

What Tests Do I Need?

Your doctor will want to do some tests to determine if the pregnancy is growing in the uterus (normal):

- You will likely need one or more blood test(s) to check the hormone level produced by the pregnancy. That hormone test is called **β-hCG** (pronounced beta H ,C ,G)
- You will also need an ultrasound. The time to do the ultrasound will depend on the level of hormone β-hCG or how far along you are in the pregnancy. The ultrasound is usually a **vaginal ultrasound** (internal ultrasound). This is not a painful examination.

If the β-hCG level is higher than 2000 IU/L, we expect to see a gestational sac (place where the baby will develop) in the uterus (womb) when a vaginal ultrasound is done. If the ultrasound does not show the pregnancy in the uterus, it likely means that it is in the fallopian tube (ectopic). Your doctor will review all this with you. Don't hesitate to ASK QUESTIONS. It is important that you understand what is happening.

How Do We Treat An Ectopic Pregnancy?

Your doctor will explain the choices available to you. Although we will always take your wishes into consideration, there are times where some options are not safe.

If left alone (no treatment), an ectopic pregnancy can rupture and create internal bleeding.

Medical Treatment (Methotrexate)

Methotrexate is a drug used to treat ectopic pregnancies as well as certain types of joint pains (arthritis) and cancer. It works by stopping the growth of the pregnancy cells. This medication is given as an injection (needle) into your muscle. You will be going home shortly after you receive your injection. In most cases, a single injection will treat the ectopic pregnancy. Occasionally, a second dose may be required.

You may be a candidate for this treatment if you have:

- Very little or no pain
- Your vital signs are normal (pulse and blood pressure)
- The level of β-hCG level is < 5000IU/L
- The size of the ectopic pregnancy is small and they did not see a fetus (baby) in the tube
- You are **available and committed to come back** to the Clinic or medical visits (usually 2 or 3)
- You are **available and committed to have regular blood tests** to measure the β-hCG levels until the levels are 0 (which may take as long as one to 2 months)

Like with any other medication, there are possible side effects with the methotrexate. Nausea, vomiting and (extremely rarely), ulcers in the mouth are some of the potential side effects.

Surgical Treatment

The surgery is usually performed by laparoscopy. This means having a general anesthetic (going “to sleep”). The gynecologist will make 3 or 4 dime size incisions (cuts) on your abdomen and insert a small camera. The pregnancy is removed from the tube (salpingostomy). On occasion, the tube may need to be removed. You will be going home the day of your surgery or the day after.

On occasion, the surgery will need to be performed through a bigger incision. This is called a laparotomy. Your hospital stay will be longer, usually 2–3 days.

Are There Other Risks?

Even if you have been treated for your ectopic pregnancy, there is always a very small chance of severe internal bleeding. You should go to the Emergency Department if:

- You suddenly feel faint or feel like passing out (loss of consciousness)
- You suddenly have severe pain in your abdomen
- You suddenly have severe pain at the top of your shoulder(s)

What Happens After My Treatment (Follow-Up)?

If you have been treated with **METHOTREXATE**, you will need:

- **β-hCG** level on **day 4** after your injection
- **β-hCG** level on **day 7** after your injection
- Blood tests must be drawn on the same day every week; the clinic will advise you which day to have the blood taken.

Rapid Access Gynecology Clinic patients:

(See contact information on back page)

- **An appointment for a visit on day 7 after your injection.** Blood work at this clinic is set up to run Wednesdays with review and patient phone call with instructions on Thursdays.
- **β-hCG** level done **every Wednesday after that, until the level is 0.** The doctors will review your results every Thursday afternoon. You will receive a phone call after that to tell you what to do.
- An appointment for **a visit when the b-hcg level is 0.**

If you have been treated with **LAPAROSCOPY** and your tube was **NOT** removed (salpingostomy):

- **β-hCG** level on **day 7** after your surgery
- Blood tests must be drawn on the same day every week; the clinic will advise you which day to have the blood taken.

Rapid Access Gynecology Clinic patients:

(See contact information on back page)

- **An appointment for a visit on day 7 after your surgery.**
- **β-hCG** level done **every Wednesday after that, until the level is 0.** The doctors will review your results every Thursday afternoon. You will receive a phone call after that to tell you what to do.

What Else Do I Need To Know?

Some important things to remember:

- ✓ Avoid sexual intercourse until your β -hCG level is 0
- ✓ If you have severe pain or feel like fainting, go to the Emergency department.
- ✓ If you have any questions, write them down and bring them with you at your next visit (see map and phone number at the back)
- ✓ Make your appointments for day 7 post treatment (medical or surgical) and 1 month post treatment by phoning the clinic.

If you have received METHOTREXATE:

- ✓ It is **VERY IMPORTANT** that you continue to go for your blood tests as instructed until your β -hCG level is 0
- ✓ Stop prenatal vitamins and folic acid
- ✓ Avoid alcohol
- ✓ Avoid gas producing food (so that you don't have more bloating and pain)
- ✓ Avoid sun exposure
- ✓ Expect some pain in your abdomen 2–7 days after your injection. This should **NOT** be severe and should get better with Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin)

When Can I Try To Get Pregnant Again?

You should discuss this with the doctor in the clinic at your visit 1 month after your treatment. Generally, we will tell you to try once your β -hCG level is 0 and you have had one normal period.

Review the information in this brochure often, so that you are very familiar with what is happening to you. **Keep this booklet with you and carry it around.** When you see a doctor at our clinic or elsewhere, show them your diary so that they can see what has been happening and can add notes too. Some patients may require additional tests before they try to get pregnant again.

Can I have another pregnancy?

Your risk of having another ectopic pregnancy is higher because you already had one ectopic pregnancy. We suggest that you do a home pregnancy test as soon as your period is late (you can buy a test at any drugstore). If it is positive, your β -hCG levels will need to be tested as outlined on page 2 of this booklet. Contact your doctor or the Rapid Access clinic as soon as your home pregnancy test is positive.

Date									
β-hCG									
Ultrasound									
Treatment									
Visit									
Comments									

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For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca> or
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