

## Emergency Department

# Ectopic Pregnancy

### General Information

An ectopic pregnancy occurs when a fertilized egg (embryo) grows outside the uterus. Even though the embryo gets bigger, it cannot grow into a baby. As the embryo gets bigger, it can cause pain and bleeding and lead to other problems. Most ectopic pregnancies happen in the fallopian tube, but they can also rarely occur in the ovary, the abdomen or the cervix. An ectopic pregnancy is a serious condition and can even be life-threatening. Most ectopic pregnancies cannot be prevented.

Your doctor will explain the treatment 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 dangerous internal bleeding. An ectopic pregnancy can be treated in two different ways, depending on the size of the embryo, the woman's symptoms, and other factors. Both treatments involve removing the embryo.

- 1. Medicine:** Your doctor can give you a shot of medicine, called Methotrexate. The medicine stops the embryo's growth and causes it to dissolve. In most cases, a single injection will treat the ectopic pregnancy. Occasionally, a second dose may be required. The medication will cause abdominal cramping and vaginal bleeding, 2–7 days after it is injected.
- 2. Surgery:** A doctor can do surgery to remove the embryo. Your doctor might or might not need to remove your fallopian tube.

Recovery from the emotional challenges of having an ectopic pregnancy can often take longer than the physical recovery. Losing a baby is a very personal experience and there is no "right way" to feel. Many women experience a profound sense of loss and grief with sadness, guilt and anger being common. For others, a pregnancy loss can bring a sense of relief. Whatever you feel, it is important to take the time you need to recover.

### Instructions

1. Complete the follow up bloodwork, ordered by the doctor.
2. Attend your appointment at the Rapid Access Gynecology Clinic (RAGC), they will call you with an appointment date and time.
3. Take medications for pain. Medications may be prescribed by the doctor, or you can take acetaminophen (Tylenol).
4. Do not have sexual intercourse until bleeding has stopped and your doctor has said it's safe to do so.
5. BC Women's Hospital offers a Pregnancy Loss Support Group. To attend, or for more information on the group, call 604-875-2149.

## **Return to Emergency if any of the following develop:**

- You experience heavy vaginal bleeding and you are soaking 1 or more maxi pad per hour.
- Your pain is not controlled by the medications given to you by the doctor or acetaminophen.
- You feel faint or dizzy.
- You experience severe pain on only one side of your abdomen.

**For more information or questions contact HealthLinkBC at 811.**

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