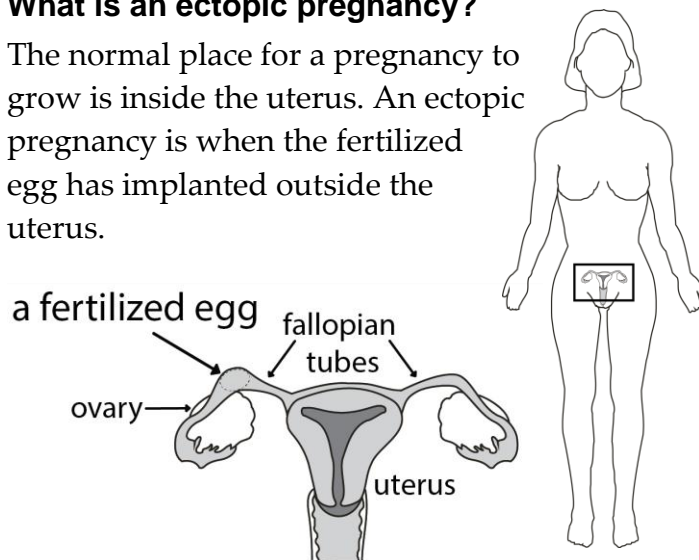


Ectopic Pregnancy and Methotrexate

What is an ectopic pregnancy?

The normal place for a pregnancy to grow is inside the uterus. An ectopic pregnancy is when the fertilized egg has implanted outside the uterus.



The most common place for an ectopic pregnancy is in a fallopian tube. If the pregnancy continues to grow here, the tiny fallopian tube can burst open. A burst fallopian tube results in serious and possibly life-threatening internal bleeding.

To protect you, the ectopic pregnancy must be ended. Consulting with a specialist (an obstetrician/gynecologist), we have given you a medication called 'methotrexate' to end your ectopic pregnancy. This medication usually stops the growth of the pregnancy. (It works 90-95% of the time.)

How does this medication work?

Methotrexate stops the growth of all rapidly dividing cells. In the case of an ectopic pregnancy, it stops the egg from growing.

What to expect after getting methotrexate

- Five (5) to 7 days after being given methotrexate, it is common to have mild abdominal (belly) pain for 1 to 2 days.
- You will have vaginal bleeding or spotting.
- You might feel sick, throw up, or have diarrhea.
- You might feel very tired and/or lightheaded.
- You might get a skin rash after being in the sun.

When to get help

Call 9-1-1 if:

- You have very heavy vaginal bleeding.
- You have really bad abdominal (belly) pain that gets worse or does not go away with pain medicine. The pain might also be in the rectal area or up into the shoulders.
- You suddenly feel dizzy or faint.
- All of a sudden you cannot hear.

Remember

An ectopic pregnancy is not a normal pregnancy. It would never grow to be a normal baby.

How to care for yourself

Until the pregnancy has ended, **you must do the following:**

- **Stop taking folic acid** and vitamins with folic acid in them (such as prenatal vitamins). Folic acid can lessen the effect of the methotrexate.
- **Keep out of the sun** if you can. Wear sunscreen and protective clothing if you must go out.
- **Do not** drink alcohol. It changes how methotrexate works.
- **Do not** have vaginal intercourse.
- **Do not** take any of these medicines because they change how methotrexate works – ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, store brand), naproxen (Naprosyn, Aleve, store brand), acetylsalicylic acid (Aspirin)

To protect yourself and others

Methotrexate leaves your body through your urine ('pee'). It can harm skin if it touches it.

For 48 hours after getting the methotrexate:

- Flush the toilet twice after each use.
- Wash any droplets of urine off of the toilet seat.
- Wash your hands well after using the toilet and before handling food.
- Make sure no one comes into contact with your urine or other body fluids.

To manage your pain

- Take acetaminophen (Tylenol or store brand) for pain.
- Try not to eat foods that give you gas. You do not want any more abdominal bloating and pain than you get from this treatment.

Follow up

For your health and safety, it is **extremely important** that you:

- Go and get all the blood tests
- See the specialist listed below to review the results of your blood tests.

Follow up with Dr. _____
on _____ (Date).

The blood tests help your doctor check your pregnancy hormone levels (also called HCG levels) and make sure those levels are decreasing. A steady decrease in your pregnancy hormone levels tells your doctor the methotrexate is working. When your pregnancy hormone levels reach zero, it means your pregnancy has ended. If your pregnancy hormone levels do not reach zero, the specialist might repeat the medication or arrange for you to have surgery to remove the ectopic pregnancy.

The specialist checks to make sure the methotrexate worked and to make sure you have not had any complications from either the medication or the pregnancy.

To learn more, it's good to ask:

- Your family doctor
- Your pharmacist
- HealthLinkBC 8-1-1 (or 7-1-1 for deaf and hearing impaired) or go online to www.HealthLinkBC.ca