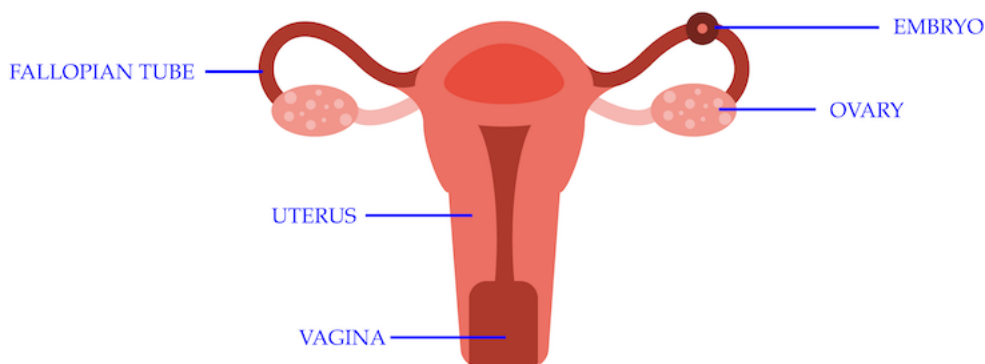


Treating an Ectopic Pregnancy With Methotrexate

Methotrexate is a medicine used to treat an ectopic pregnancy. An ectopic pregnancy happens when a fertilized egg grows outside the uterus, usually in one of the fallopian tubes.

Unfortunately, this type of pregnancy cannot continue safely. It may cause the fallopian tube to rupture or break, causing dangerous bleeding. The growing tissue can cause pain, heavy bleeding, or even life-threatening problems if not treated.

TUBAL ECTOPIC PREGNANCY



Methotrexate works by stopping the ectopic pregnancy from growing. Your body then absorbs the tissue over time. This treatment may help you avoid surgery. Your care team will follow your hormone levels closely to make sure the medicine is working.

This handout explains how methotrexate works, what to expect during recovery, and how to care for yourself at home.

Having an ectopic pregnancy can be an emotional and painful experience. It is OK to feel sad, angry, or confused. Support from family, support groups, and counseling can also help. Talk to your care team about how you feel. They can give you resources to help you find support.

Diagnosis and Testing

At your visit, your care team may do:

- A pelvic exam to check for pain or swelling
- Blood tests to check pregnancy hormone levels
- An ultrasound to look at your uterus and fallopian tubes

What to Know About Taking Methotrexate

- It is given as a shot, usually once.
- You will need blood tests for several weeks to make sure your levels of pregnancy hormone, also called beta hCG, go down to zero. A second shot may be recommended if the hormone level does not decline enough over time.
- Do not take vitamins with folic acid. Methotrexate works against folic acid.
- Avoid alcohol until your care team says it is safe.
- Do not have sex, use tampons, or douche until your care team tells you it is safe.
- Do not take anti-inflammatory drugs for 1 week after treatment or until your care team says it is OK. These include aspirin, ibuprofen like Motrin® or Advil®, and naproxen like Aleve®.
- You may take acetaminophen, brand name Tylenol®, for pain, unless your care team gives you other instructions. Tell your care team first if you take blood thinners, have a history of bleeding or stomach ulcers, or have a history of kidney or liver disease.
- Tell your care team if you have any other health problems, especially stomach ulcers, lung or breathing problems, or liver or kidney disease.

Common Side Effects

You may have:

- Belly pain or cramping
- Nausea or upset stomach
- Sores inside your mouth

- Fatigue or tiredness
- Diarrhea
- Mild vaginal bleeding

Things You Can Do to Help Your Recovery

- **Stay hydrated:** Drink water often to help your body process the medicine.
- **Eat simple foods:** Eat small, bland meals if you feel sick to your stomach.
- **Avoid gas-producing foods:** Foods like beans, cabbage, or broccoli may make belly pain worse.
- **Avoid folic acid:** Check the labels of your vitamins and food. Do not take anything with folic acid unless your care team says it is OK.
- **Rest often:** Your body needs energy to heal.
- **Avoid heavy lifting:** This helps prevent bleeding and gives your body time to heal.
- **No sex or tampons:** These can cause infection or make bleeding worse.
- **No alcohol:** Alcohol can make side effects worse and may harm your liver.
- **Stay out of the sun:** Methotrexate can make your skin more sensitive to sunlight. Wear sunscreen and limit your time in the sun.
- **Use birth control:** You may need to use birth control for 4 to 6 months after treatment. This gives your body time to heal.

What to Expect

- Your care team will check your blood until your pregnancy hormone level is zero.
- Most people need only 1 shot, but some may need another.
- You may feel sad or emotional. This is normal.
- You can usually try to get pregnant again in the future, but your care team may ask you to wait at least 3 to 6 months.
- Keep all follow-up appointments. These are important for your safety.

When to Contact Your Care Team

Call your care team if you have:

- Mild to moderate abdominal pain that is not getting better or is getting worse
- Nausea or vomiting that lasts more than 24 hours or makes it hard to keep fluids down
- Heavy vaginal bleeding, such as soaking a pad every 1 to 2 hours for more than 2 hours
- A fever of 100.4°F or 38°C or higher that lasts more than 24 hours or does not go down with medicine
- Feeling very tired, weak, or dizzy
- New or worsening pain in your shoulder or neck
- Any new or unusual symptoms that worry you

When to Call 911 or Go to the Emergency Room

Get help right away if you:

- Have sudden, severe abdominal pain that is much worse than before
- Have heavy vaginal bleeding that soaks more than 1 pad per hour for 2 hours in a row or will not stop
- Faint, pass out, or feel like you might pass out
- Have severe dizziness or trouble standing up
- Have severe pain in your shoulder, chest, or neck
- Have trouble breathing, chest pain, or a fast heartbeat

If you are not sure if your symptoms are serious, it is always safest to get emergency help.

Thank You for Choosing Us

Thank you for trusting us with your care. We are here to support you and want you to feel your best. Contact us with any questions.



IF YOU HAVE A MEDICAL EMERGENCY, CALL 911 OR GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM.

The information presented is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider. Contact your health care provider if you believe you have a health problem.

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