

Obstetrics and Gynaecology

Early Pregnancy & Emergency Gynaecology Unit

What is expectant management of an ectopic pregnancy

Expectant management is the close monitoring instead of immediate treatment of an ectopic pregnancy, allowing your body to manage the condition.

The treatment will only be suitable if you fit within certain criteria:

The pregnancy hormone, (hCG) is low;

- You are medically stable;
- You have only mild discomfort and no pain;
- The scan confirms a small ectopic pregnancy with no bleeding into the abdomen.

How will I be monitored?

An initial blood hormone test (hCG) will have been performed; this will then be repeated in 48 hours. The medical staff caring for you will ensure it drops significantly. As long as the hCG level drops you will then be monitored every 48 hours for one week, then weekly until the hCG hormone is below 15mIU/ml. A further scan is not usually necessary unless your symptoms change or your hCG levels rise; then other treatment options may need to be considered. Occasionally an ectopic pregnancy can rupture despite low hCG levels. If you are concerned at any time throughout your treatment about your level of pain please contact the Emergency Gynaecology Unit.



How long will I need to be monitored?

This will depend on how long it takes for your hCG to drop below 15mIU/ml. This can vary considerably from woman to woman. It can take anything between two weeks and in rare cases up to three months. In most cases, hCG levels have fallen enough for you to be discharged within around four weeks. This method of management will only be offered if you are suitable and it is the least invasive form of management. It is proven that a number of ectopic pregnancies will need no active treatment and will resolve on its own if we watch and wait. Almost 75% of women managed in this way need no further treatment. This type of management can be quite worrying as you may feel as though no one is doing anything, however, if the pregnancy does resolve on its own avoiding surgery or drug treatments your recovery will be faster.

In your next pregnancy

The risk of a repeat ectopic pregnancy is 1 in 10. However remember that you still have a greater chance of having a normal healthy pregnancy following expectant or conservative management of an ectopic pregnancy compared to those who have surgical management of an ectopic pregnancy.

It is important that you have a scan at approximately six to seven weeks in the Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit to confirm the location of your pregnancy. This can be organised by your GP or by contacting the Unit directly on the number provided below.

Your feelings

It is entirely normal to feel helpless, isolated and angry with yourself. Depression, guilt and self-blame are very common emotions after the loss of a baby. As time passes, you will be able to deal with your loss more positively. You may find that you are ready to get on with your life quite quickly. If your symptoms continue, you should get in touch with your GP who will offer you the opportunity to see a counsellor who will be able to help you. Your well-being is most important.

Your partner may find it difficult to express his feelings. He may well feel that he should be strong and protect you from any more distress. If this is

Patient Information

the case, you will need to encourage him to talk to you about his feelings. Sharing each others feelings can be very helpful.

Allow yourself time to recover physically and emotionally before trying for another baby.

If you need any further information or advice please ask the staff.

Contact information

Early Pregnancy & Emergency Gynaecology Unit: 024 7696 7000

The Ectopic Pregnancy Trust

Helpline 020 7733 2653

www.ectopic.org

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 7000 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

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