

Obstetrics and Gynaecology: Emergency Gynaecology Unit (EGU) / Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit (EPAU)

Medical treatment of ectopic pregnancy

This treatment has been introduced into the clinical practice to avoid surgery, but requires careful follow-up.

The follow-up means attending for blood tests within the first week and thereafter once or twice weekly until the tests are negative. The doctor or nurse will explain the schedule of blood tests to you.

How successful is the medical treatment?

Success rates vary depending on the circumstances in which Methotrexate is given and studies report success rates of 65-95%. Success rates tend to be higher when women are treated with lower beta hCG levels. Your doctor should be able to indicate to you the success rate of Methotrexate. If it is not successful we may have to reconsider medical treatment or surgery.

Methotrexate is the drug used to “dissolve” the pregnancy. It is given by injection in the leg or buttock. Methotrexate is also extensively used for a variety of clinical conditions such as psoriasis and some malignancies.

Side effects of the drug are minimal but may include nausea, vomiting and a sore mouth.



Patient Information

During treatment you should avoid:

- alcohol
- folic acid containing vitamins – as they may interfere with the treatment
- sexual intercourse – as it may cause rupture of the ectopic pregnancy

Before the injection is given to you, you will have some blood tests to ensure you are suitable for the treatment. On day 4 and day 7 following the injection, blood tests will be repeated. If the levels of the pregnancy hormone are not falling, you may need a further scan and treatment. Follow-up will be on a weekly basis until the hormone levels are negative.

The main worry with an ectopic pregnancy is that they may rupture and bleed. This risk exists while the pregnancy hormone persists in the blood. When all of the placental tissue is dissolved the level of the hormone hCG will return to normal.

It is very important, therefore, that you come for regular blood tests. If you develop any sharp pains or an increasing discomfort in your abdomen you should immediately phone the Early Pregnancy & Emergency Gynae Unit, contact details are given at the end of this information.

However, please remember that:

- It is likely that the pain may get a little worse in the first week after the injection
- As the pregnancy dissolves and the hormone levels fall you may get some vaginal bleeding like a period.

Aftercare

You should **avoid pregnancy for three months** after the completion of the treatment, in the mean time use a reliable barrier or hormonal contraception.

Patient Information

In your next pregnancy

The risk of a repeat ectopic pregnancy is 1 in 10. However remember that you still have a much greater chance of having a normal healthy pregnancy, this is nearly the same after surgical treatment.

It is important that you have a scan at approximately 6 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.

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 the most important thing.

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 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 Gynae Unit: **024 7696 7000**

Further information

The Ectopic Pregnancy Trust Helpline: **020 77332653**

www.ectopic.org

Patient Information

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

Document History	
Department:	Gynaecology
Contact:	27000
Updated:	September 2020
Review:	September 2022
Version:	4.1
Reference:	HIC/LFT/1156/10