

Patient Information

Emergency Gynaecology Unit

Surgical treatment of ectopic pregnancy

This leaflet will explain the various operative procedures that are possible to treat an ectopic pregnancy. We will discuss your preferences with you before your operation, including your desire for future pregnancies, or sterilisation if you have completed your family.

Laparoscopy (keyhole surgery)

This operation is performed under general anaesthetic. It involves the surgeon making 3 or 4 small incisions in your abdomen: one at the umbilicus (navel) and 2 or 3 lower near the bikini line. A small amount of gas is introduced into your abdominal cavity to inflate it, to allow the surgeon to see the structures inside your abdomen and the ectopic pregnancy through the laparoscope. A laparoscope is a small telescope-like instrument.

Once an ectopic pregnancy is confirmed, the surgical procedure undertaken depends on the location of the ectopic pregnancy and condition of your fallopian tubes.

An affected tube will usually be removed fully or partially. This is called a **salpingectomy** (partial or complete). However, your other tube will remain along with your ovaries.

In certain cases, it may be possible to make a cut on the tube and remove the



Patient Information

pregnancy leaving the tube intact, this is called a **salpingotomy**.

There is only a small risk of injury to the bowel, bladder, and blood vessels with the laparoscope (1 in 1000).

Laparotomy

A cut about 8 to 10cm long is made usually along the bikini line to enter inside the abdomen. This procedure is chosen if the laparoscopic procedure is unsuccessful, impossible, or if it is felt unsafe to perform a laparoscopy.

Your hospital stay

This will vary depending on the operation you need. It is normally 1 to 2 days after laparoscopy and 3 to 5 days after laparotomy.

After discharge

The ward staff will give you all the necessary advice on aftercare. You may experience period like bleeding for 1 to 2 weeks. Avoid using tampons during this time.

You should also avoid sexual intercourse until the bleeding has stopped.

Follow up

If there is any risk that some of the pregnancy tissue may remain, then you will be advised to have weekly follow up blood tests to monitor hCG (pregnancy hormone) levels as they decrease.

You may be sent an outpatient appointment for 6 weeks time.

Returning to work

It may be anytime from 2 to 6 weeks depending on the type of operation you have had and the type of work you do. Your doctor will advise you.

Patient Information

In your next pregnancy

The chances of having another ectopic pregnancy are about 10 to 20%.

Once your next pregnancy is confirmed, 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 given at the end of this information.

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 these 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 wellbeing is the most important thing.

Your partner may find it difficult to express their feelings. They may well feel that they should be strong and protect you from any more distress. If this is the case, you will need to encourage them to talk to you about their feelings. Sharing each other's 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 do not hesitate to ask the staff.

Contact information

Early Pregnancy & Emergency Gynaecology Unit: **024 7696 7000**

Patient Information

The Ectopic Pregnancy Trust

Helpline: **020 77332653**

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.

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