

Obstetrics and Gynaecology

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 naturally.

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 or abdominal pain that is controlled with analgesia
- 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 carried out, this will be repeated in 48 hours. The medical staff caring for you will make sure it drops significantly. As long as the hCG level drops you will be monitored in a further 48 hours and then a further 72 hours. Providing your levels continue to fall, you will be monitored weekly until the hCG hormone is below 20mIU/ml. A further scan is not usually necessary unless your symptoms change or your hCG levels rise. If this happens 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.



Patient Information

How long will I need to be monitored?

This will depend on how long it takes for your hCG to drop below 20mIU/ml. This can be different from woman to woman and can take anything between two weeks and in rare cases up to three months. In most cases hCG levels will have fallen enough for you to be discharged within around four weeks.

This expectant method will only be offered if you are suitable, and it is the least invasive form of management of an ectopic pregnancy. 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. It is proven that a number of ectopic pregnancies will need no active treatment and will resolve on their own if we watch and wait. Almost 75% of women managed in this way need no medical treatment.

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 after an 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 around 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 completely 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 hopefully be able to deal with your loss more positively. You may find that you are ready to get on with your life quite quickly, there is no right or wrong when it comes to coping with pregnancy loss. If your symptoms do 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.

Patient Information

Your partner may find it difficult to express their feelings. They may feel that they should be strong and protect you from any more distress. If this is the case, it may help to encourage them to talk 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 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.

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