



Methotrexate Treatment of Ectopic Pregnancy

An ectopic pregnancy is an abnormal pregnancy that has formed outside of the uterus. Left untreated, an ectopic pregnancy can lead to a life-threatening emergency. Methotrexate is a medication used to treat an ectopic pregnancy as an alternative to surgery and is successful approximately 86-94% of the time.

Methotrexate is a cytotoxic drug used in large doses for cancer treatment. A much smaller dose is used to treat ectopic pregnancy. The dose of methotrexate is based on your height and weight and is given as an injection in each buttocks. About 20% of the time, a second dose is necessary (some doctors treat all women with ectopic pregnancy with multiple doses of methotrexate, but there are more side effects possible and more frequent appointments are necessary).

Advantages to methotrexate treatment:

- Avoids surgery and risk associated with having surgery
- Optimizes future fertility

Risk of methotrexate treatment:

- Incomplete treatment requiring a second dose of methotrexate
- Failure which may result in need for surgery, possibly as an emergency
- Side effects include: mouth sores, sun sensitivity, fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, bloating, chest pain, temporary drop in blood count that may increase risk of infection or bleeding
 - ❖ Most side effects occur with doses of methotrexate that are higher than those used for treating ectopic pregnancy

What to expect after methotrexate treatment:

You will likely experience an increase in lower abdominal cramping during the first 10-14 days of treatment. Light vaginal bleeding may also be present. If you have severe abdominal pain or heavy vaginal bleeding, call your doctor immediately.

Bloodwork is usually done to check Beta-HCG (pregnancy hormone) on the day you start treatment (this is day one), day four, day seven, and then weekly until the HCG is negative. This can take 6-8 weeks or longer.

Important Instructions after Receiving Methotrexate:

- Do not use alcohol
- Do not take folic acid – this includes vitamins that may contain this
- Do not have intercourse
- Avoid prolonged sun exposure. Use sunscreen if out in the sun
- Do not use advil, ibuprofen, motrin, or aspirin (NSAIDS). Tylenol is OK
- Get your blood work drawn as ordered: day four, seven, then weekly
- Birth control is advised for at least two months after completing therapy

Call our office at (603)647-0494 if you have:

- Severe abdominal pain, shoulder pain, dizziness, fainting or rapid heartrate
- Heavy vaginal bleeding
- Redness and swelling at the injection site

We understand that pregnancy loss is an emotional experience. If you are having difficulty coping please let us know so we can assist you with the appropriate treatment.

