

Sexual Activity and Future Pregnancy

If you had an ectopic pregnancy, it might be difficult for you to get pregnant again and there is approximately a 15% chance that you will have another ectopic pregnancy. It is recommended that you avoid sexual activity until your pregnancy test (hCG level) is negative. A barrier contraception such as a condom should be used for 1 month following treatment. If you wish to become pregnant again, you should resume taking your folic acid once your pregnancy test (hCG level) is negative since it is recommended you take folic acid for at least 1 month before you conceive.

Precautions and Safety

Methotrexate belongs to a group of medicines called cytotoxic medicines which can be excreted in body fluids and waste including blood, urine, faeces, vomit and vaginal fluid. In general, precautions to protect other people should be taken for one week after taking this medication.

This includes,

- Wearing gloves to clean any spill of body fluid or waste.
- Use paper towels or old rags, a strong solution of non-bleaching detergent and large amounts of water to mop up the spill.

- Discarding the towels or rags into a separate waste bag
- Washing linen or clothing that is heavily contaminated by body fluids or waste separately from other items.
- Use a strong solution of non-bleaching detergent and large amounts of water.
- Placing soiled disposable sanitary pads in a plastic bag, seal and dispose into the garbage.

What should I do when I go to the bathroom?

You may use the toilet as you normally would but for the first 48 hours after receiving methotrexate you should flush the toilet twice with the lid closed. This will make certain there is no waste left in the toilet. Sharing a bathroom with your family is safe as long as all urine and stool are cleaned from the toilet. Septic and sewer systems are not affected.

Always wash your hands well with soap and water.

Adapted from,

- American Society for Reproductive Medicine Patient Information Fact Sheet- Ectopic Pregnancy, 2008.

- Methotrexate treatment of tubal and interstitial ectopic pregnancy, www.uptodate.com, 2013.

- LHSC PATIENT INFO: LRCP - Chemotherapy and Safety in the Home NS5988

Methotrexate Treatment for Ectopic Pregnancy

PATIENT INFORMATION



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What is Ectopic Pregnancy?

When you become pregnant, the embryo (fertilized egg) travels from your fallopian tube to your uterus (womb) where the embryo implants (sticks) and grows into a fetus. An ectopic pregnancy occurs when the embryo grows outside of the uterus. This usually takes place in one of your fallopian tubes, but can also take place in your ovary, cervix, or somewhere else in your pelvic cavity. An ectopic pregnancy is a very dangerous or life-threatening condition if it is not treated.



How Do Doctors Diagnose Ectopic Pregnancies?

By ordering a blood test and ultrasound, your physician may be able to determine if you have an ectopic pregnancy.

If you have an ectopic pregnancy, your doctor will want to treat you right away. An ectopic pregnancy can be treated in different ways. Sometimes the ectopic pregnancy can be removed surgically. This can be done either through an abdominal incision or laparoscopically—using instruments inserted through small incisions in your lower belly. Ectopic pregnancy can also be treated using a drug called methotrexate.

Methotrexate

Methotrexate is a drug that stops the ectopic pregnancy from continuing to develop. Your doctor will give you this medicine by injection and may do so more than once. To determine if methotrexate has worked, the doctor will do a series of blood tests for “pregnancy hormone” (human chorionic gonadotropin OR hCG). Your doctor will follow the hCG levels until they are negative, which will indicate that the pregnancy has ended. Approximately 90% of ectopic pregnancies can be treated with methotrexate if detected early enough.

Possible Side Effects

Possible side effects from methotrexate can include, fatigue, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and mouth sores.

After Receiving Methotrexate...

You can expect some abdominal cramping and vaginal bleeding in the days after receiving methotrexate. It is important to know that there is a chance an ectopic pregnancy can rupture and surgery may be required. Therefore, call your doctor immediately if you develop intense or significant increased abdominal pain. Also, call your doctor if the bleeding is heavier than a period or you are concerned.

- Avoid drinking alcohol for 2 weeks
- Avoid nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs like Ibuprofen, Aspirin, Advil and Aleve for 2 weeks. Tylenol is considered safe.
- Avoid sun exposure and tanning salons for 1 month because your skin can be more sensitive than usual and burn
- Avoid foods and vitamins containing folic acid until your pregnancy test (hCG level) is negative since it can decrease the effectiveness of the methotrexate.
- It is also recommended that you avoid vigorous physical activity until your pregnancy test (hCG level) is negative.