

Methotrexate for Ectopic Pregnancy

Ectopic Pregnancy

An ectopic pregnancy means a fertilized egg is growing outside of your womb (uterus). The egg is usually in a fallopian tube, but sometimes it is in an ovary, the cervix or the abdomen.

Since the egg is growing outside the uterus, it is not possible for the egg to survive. Because of this and other risks, your health care provider has prescribed a medicine (methotrexate) to treat this condition.

You may feel a sense of loss and grief from losing this pregnancy. You can ask your health care provider about referrals for support.

Methotrexate

Methotrexate works by stopping growth of the rapidly growing cells that occur in pregnancy. Methotrexate is a liquid given by injection (shot) into a muscle.

What to Expect After a Dose of Methotrexate

After receiving a dose of methotrexate, you will have some vaginal bleeding from the loss of the ectopic pregnancy. You may also have severe abdominal pain. (See “Possible Side Effects” on the other side.)

Follow the schedule for follow-up lab work on days one, four and seven after receiving your dose. Your health care provider may order a repeat dose of methotrexate if it is needed.

Important

- It is very important for you to have your blood taken and tested until your pregnancy hormone level is back to zero. This may take 3 to 6 weeks. During this time:
 - Do not take vitamins that contain folic acid (folate). Folic acid may cause methotrexate to be less effective.
 - Do not drink alcohol.
 - Do not have sex, douche or use tampons.
- This medicine may cause stomach bloating and gas.
 - Try to avoid foods (such as beans, raw vegetables and carbonated beverages) that cause gas.
 - You may take over-the-counter simethicone (such as Gas-X[®], Mylanta Gas Relief[®], or Maalox[®]) to relieve gas pressure.
- You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol[®]) or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicines like ibuprofen (Advil[®] or Motrin[®]) or naproxen (Aleve[®]) for pain the first few days after the shot unless your health care provider gives you other directions.
- Methotrexate may make your skin more sensitive to light than normal. Do not use sunlamps or tanning beds. Wear sunscreen and protective clothing while you are outside.

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- Do not get pregnant for at least 3 months after you receive the methotrexate. After your pregnancy hormone level is back to zero, use birth control if you resume sexual activity during this 3-month period.
- Some medicines may interact with methotrexate. Tell your health care provider what you are taking.
- To avoid mouth sores, don't use alcohol-based mouthwashes, hard toothbrushes or dental floss for 2 weeks after a dose. All of these may irritate your mouth and increase the chance of sores.
- Keep all follow-up appointments with your health care provider.

Possible Side Effects

The following is a partial list of the side effects you may have with this medicine. You may have some, all or none of those listed, or you may have other side effects not listed. Most side effects last only a short time.

Common:

- lower abdominal pain (for 2 to 3 days and up to 7 days after the methotrexate is given)
- vaginal spotting or bleeding (as during your period)
- nausea or indigestion for 24 hours after the methotrexate is given
- fatigue or tiredness
- increased sensitivity to sunlight (for up to 5 days after the dose is given)
- stomach bloating or gas.

Less common:

- vomiting
- mouth sores (more common if you receive more than 1 dose)
- diarrhea
- sore throat
- dizziness
- temporary hair loss
- temporary changes in tests to measure how well your liver is working.

Although there is only a minimal risk of side effects from methotrexate when used for an ectopic pregnancy, side effects can last for up to 2 weeks after a dose.

When To Call Your Health Care Provider

Call your health care provider right away if you:

- feel sharp, stabbing pain in your abdomen
- have a significant increase in abdominal pain
- have unusual bleeding or bruising
- develop a fever or chills
- develop heavy vaginal bleeding
- feel dizzy or faint
- have a rapid or racing heartbeat.