

## Ectopic Pregnancy and Use of Methotrexate

An ectopic pregnancy occurs outside of the uterus. Only a pregnancy inside the uterus can grow and develop into a healthy baby.

Cells rapidly divide during pregnancy. Methotrexate is a medicine that slows or stops the production of fast-growing cells. To treat ectopic pregnancy, methotrexate is given by injection, or shot, in the hospital, clinic or physician's office. In some cases, methotrexate can also be injected directly into the ectopic pregnancy.

*If you have any questions, please call your physician's office.*

### Before receiving methotrexate

Be sure to tell your physician if you:

- Are allergic to methotrexate.
- Have immune system disorders, such as lupus.
- Have liver disease, kidney disease or anemia (decreased number of red blood cells).
- Are breastfeeding. If you are breastfeeding, talk to your physician about other feeding options. Do not resume breastfeeding until you have been cleared by your physician.
- Are taking any medications or supplements.

### Number of methotrexate injections

Methotrexate can be given as a single injection (Day 1) or as a set of 2 injections (Day 1 and Day 4). Your physician has chosen the best treatment for you.

### What to expect

After receiving methotrexate, many patients have mild nausea, bloating and diarrhea. Several days later, pregnancy hormones begin to decrease. This may cause bleeding much like your menstrual period.

#### **Blood tests**

Blood tests are done to see how the methotrexate is working. The tests will measure your human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG) hormone levels, which decrease as the placenta shrinks. After getting methotrexate (Day 1), you will have blood drawn on:

- Day 4
- Day 7

If the methotrexate is working and your hCG levels decrease as expected, you will then need to have blood drawn once a week until your hCG returns to a non-pregnant level. This often takes 3 to 4 weeks. Sometimes additional doses of methotrexate are needed.

**It is important that you complete these blood tests as ordered by your physician.**

If the methotrexate does not work, you may need surgery. Your physician will discuss this in more detail with you.

### ***Medications and foods to avoid***

Until your hCG has fallen to a non-pregnant level:

- Stop taking prenatal vitamins containing folic acid/folate.
- Do not take proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) such as omeprazole (Prilosec®), esomeprazole magnesium (Nexium®), pantoprazole sodium (Protonix®) or lansoprazole (Prevacid®).
- Do not drink alcohol.
- Avoid foods high in folate such as leafy green vegetables, beans, peas, lentils and oranges.
- Do not take penicillin antibiotics.
- Do not take nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®) or aspirin.

### ***Activity limits***

Certain activities may cause bleeding into your abdomen. Until cleared by your physician:

- Do not have sexual intercourse.
- Do not engage in aerobic exercise, such as bicycling, fast walking, jogging or swimming.
- Do not lift anything greater than 20 pounds.

### ***Side effects***

Common side effects of methotrexate include:

- Upset stomach or nausea
- Decreased appetite
- Diarrhea
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Mouth sores
- Increased chance of getting an infection
- Skin sensitivity to sunlight and ultraviolet light

## When to call your physician

Call your physician's office right away if you have any of these symptoms:

- A sign of an allergic reaction such as itching, swelling of your face or hands or tingling in your throat
- Blistering or red skin rash
- Dark colored urine or pale stools
- A temperature more than 100.2 degrees F with chills, sore throat or body aches
- Loss of appetite
- Severe nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Yellowing of the skin or eyes
- Mouth sores
- Sudden onset or increase of abdominal, pelvic or shoulder pain
- Vaginal bleeding that is heavy enough to soak through 1 pad every half hour for 2 hours in a row
- Feeling lightheaded, dizzy or like you might pass out

**Call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Department if you have these symptoms:**

- **Trouble breathing or shortness of breath**

## Contact information

If you have any of the above symptoms or are just not sure about a symptom, please call your physician's office.

**For all emergencies, call 911.**