Ectopic Pregnancy

What is an ectopic pregnancy?

An ectopic pregnancy (also called tubal pregnancy) is a pregnancy that develops (grows) outside the uterus, usually in the fallopian tubes. It is a potential medical emergency and can lead to death if not treated.
What are the symptoms?

- Abdominal pain
- No periods
- Vaginal bleeding or spotting
- Pain while urinating (peeing)

The most common misdiagnosis given to early ectopic pregnancy is pelvic inflammatory disease (PID).

More severe internal bleeding may cause lower back pain, abdominal, or pelvic pain. There may be cramping or tenderness on one side of the pelvis.

Ectopic pregnancy can mimic (look like) symptoms of other diseases such as appendicitis or referred shoulder pain (felt in another body part).

Causes

There are a number of risk factors for ectopic pregnancies. However, in as many as 1 out of 2 of women, no risk factors are identified.
Outlook
Many women who have had ectopic pregnancies go on to have healthy pregnancies later. The chance of recovery with an ectopic pregnancy is very good if it is diagnosed and treated early.

If you get pregnant again, it is very important to contact your healthcare provider early to make sure the pregnancy is inside the uterus, where it should be.

How is an ectopic pregnancy treated?
• If an ectopic pregnancy is discovered early, your doctor can give you methotrexate. This medicine dissolves the egg, and your body reabsorbs it, or it will pass with your next period.

• If hemorrhage (heavy bleeding) has already happened, you may need surgery.
Are there any complications?
The most common complication is a rupture (breaks open) with internal hemorrhage which may lead to hypovolemic (not enough blood is circulating) shock. Death from a rupture is rare in women who can get modern medical care.

Can ectopic pregnancies be prevented?
An ectopic pregnancy is generally not preventable. It is, however, possible to decrease some of the risk factors:

› If you are diagnosed with PID, take the prescribed antibiotics until it is completely taken care of. Then follow up with your family doctor to make sure you are cured.

› Avoid sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Ask your healthcare provider for more information on safe sex and avoiding STIs.

› If you plan to get pregnant soon and are using an IUD (intrauterine device), talk about this with your family doctor.

› Surgery on the reproductive system, bowels, or lower abdomen can lead to scarring which increases the risk of ectopic pregnancy.

› Women who are older than 35 are also at a higher risk for ectopic pregnancy.
Follow-up

Whether you received medicine or had surgery, you will need to follow up with your health care professional for blood tests to make sure that the ectopic pregnancy has been completely treated.

If you have any questions, please ask.
We are here to help you.

Notes:

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