



EARLY PREGNANCY ASSESSMENT SERVICE (EPAS)

INFORMATION SHEET

ECTOPIC PREGNANCY

We are very sorry you are experiencing an ectopic pregnancy at this time. This information sheet helps to explain the results of the ultrasound scan and also explains what you might expect over the next few weeks.

An ectopic pregnancy is a pregnancy outside of the womb most commonly found in a fallopian tube. It can be located elsewhere in the pelvis. Some women present with little or no symptoms, others may experience severe pain and bleeding and require emergency treatment.

The cause for an ectopic pregnancy is not always known. But some known causes are a previous history of pelvic inflammatory disease (e.g. chlamydia), tubal surgery or sterilisation and previous ectopic pregnancy. Current use of an IUCD (intrauterine contraceptive device) and IVF may also increase the risk for ectopic pregnancy.

Treatment for ectopic pregnancy will depend on the location and gestation of the pregnancy.

If following your ultrasound scan no pregnancy can be located in the uterus and you have no pain, the doctor may decide to monitor you with regular blood tests and a repeat ultrasound scan. Should you experience any further bleeding or pain, you should seek medical attention **urgently** through the Emergency Department.

If on ultrasound scan, an ectopic pregnancy is found, you may need an operation to remove the ectopic pregnancy. This can usually be performed by laparoscopy. Sometimes a larger incision called a laparotomy needs to be made. If at all possible the doctors will try to preserve your fallopian tube. If the tube is too badly damaged it will need to be removed.

In some cases a drug called Methotrexate is used. This helps to break down the pregnancy over a few days. This is given by intramuscular injection.

If you have had a fallopian tube removed, the effect on your fertility depends on whether your other tube is functional, but it is likely that you will conceive again. If however, you have had an ectopic pregnancy in the past; it does increase your chance of a second ectopic pregnancy. If you become pregnant again you should see your doctor as soon as possible to arrange an early ultrasound scan.

Experiencing an ectopic pregnancy can leave you with many emotions to deal with such as shock, trauma, grief and fear for future pregnancies. This may take time to deal with and you may find counselling helpful. Please contact our Social Work Department on 9382 6670 for further help and support.

For further help and information please contact Sr Nikki Collins, Monday to Friday between 7.30am and 11.30am in the Early Pregnancy Assessment Service, Department of Reproductive Medicine telephone 9382 6701. For patients from the Macquarie Ward please phone 9382 6298 or 9382 6299.