

METHOTREXATE FOR ECTOPIC PREGNANCY



the women's
the royal women's hospital
victoria australia

This information is for patients who have been diagnosed with an ectopic pregnancy and need to have treatment with methotrexate medication.

What is methotrexate?

Methotrexate is a medicine used in chemotherapy which stops the rapid growth of an ectopic pregnancy.

How is methotrexate given?

Methotrexate is given as an injection into a muscle (often in the bottom). Usually one injection is required but a small number of women need a second injection or multiple injections. This will be discussed with you by your treating team.

Monitoring your hCG level

Human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG) is a hormone monitored between each methotrexate cycle. After your methotrexate injection, your hCG level is monitored using a blood test on day four and day seven and then weekly until the hormone level is back to normal. This can take several weeks.

Are there any side effects?

With one dose of methotrexate you may not experience any side effects, however you may with more than one dose.

Some possible side effects of this medication include nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramping, skin rashes, indigestion, tiredness, light headedness or dizziness. Some women may experience sensitivity to sunlight, temporary hair loss, sore throat or mouth and lung

inflammation, but this is uncommon.

Can I have sex during my treatment?

It's important to avoid having sex during your treatment and until your hormone level settles. Talk with your doctor about when it is safe to recommence sexual activity. It is important not to get pregnant again for three months after your treatment because of the possible effects on the developing baby. Contraception is recommended during this time.

Your doctor or pharmacist can advise you about the different contraceptive options available.

What should be avoided during treatment with methotrexate?

Anti-inflammatory medicines such as ibuprofen (Nurofen[®]), diclofenac (Voltaren[®]) and aspirin can increase the risk of side effects from methotrexate. Avoid taking these medicines during methotrexate treatment and for one week after your treatment has finished.

Products containing folic acid, including multivitamins, can reduce the effectiveness of treatment with methotrexate. Avoid products with folic acid during your treatment. Consult your doctor or pharmacist for advice.

Alcohol can increase the risk of side effects from methotrexate. Avoid drinking alcohol for seven days after your injection.

Special precautions

Methotrexate can remain in body fluids (vomit, urine and faeces) for up to seven days after your treatment is completed. Take special care for seven days after your injection to reduce the chance of others being exposed to methotrexate.

- After using the toilet, close the lid and use a full flush.
- Use gloves if handling clothing or linen with your body fluids on them. Wash these items straight away.

Important: When to come to hospital

Come to the hospital if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Severe abdominal pain
- Shoulder tip pain
- Heavy vaginal bleeding or unusual bruising and bleeding
- Dizzy spells or fainting
- Fever or any other signs of infection

Where to get more information

About methotrexate:

Royal Women's Hospital Medicines Information Line

T: (03) 8345 3190

Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) 9am - 4pm

About Ectopic Pregnancy refer to:

www.thewomens.org.au/wm-ectopic

About your treatment contact:

Early pregnancy assessment service (EPAS)

T: (03) 8345 3643 (leave a message and your call will be returned later)

Disclaimer: The Royal Women's Hospital does not accept any liability to any person for the information or advice (or use of such information or advice) which is provided in this fact sheet or incorporated into it by reference. We provide this information on the understanding that all persons accessing it take responsibility for assessing its relevance and accuracy. Women are encouraged to discuss their health needs with a health practitioner. If you have concerns about your health, you should seek advice from your health care provider or if you require urgent care you should go to the nearest hospital Emergency Department. © The Royal Women's Hospital, June 2017