

Methotrexate Therapy

Your doctor strongly suspects that you have an ectopic pregnancy (a pregnancy which is implanted outside of the uterus—usually in the fallopian tube). This condition can be treated either surgically or medically. In your case, your doctor feels you are a candidate for medical treatment.

The medication used to treat ectopic pregnancies is called methotrexate. Methotrexate is a chemotherapeutic drug originally used to treat abnormal growth of the placenta. The main advantage of being treated with methotrexate is that you avoid the risks of a surgical procedure, including pain, bleeding, infection, damage to or loss of internal organs, and risks of anesthesia. The main disadvantage of methotrexate therapy for patients with ectopic pregnancies is that sometimes during treatment (less than 10% overall) the ectopic pregnancy can rupture the fallopian tube and you will need emergency surgery, and may lose your tube and/or require a blood transfusion. In addition, some patients require more than one dose of methotrexate. Ill effects from the medication are very rare at the low dose you would receive.

Since you meet very strict criteria, your chances of having a complication from methotrexate are low. However, the overall chances for success with this therapy depend to a large degree on your cooperation during the follow-up period. Specifically, **you must agree to return for lab work in 4 days, again at 7 days, and weekly thereafter until your pregnancy test is negative.** In addition, **you must agree to remain in the office when instructed until follow-up lab results are available, or return immediately if we so request.**

It is common to experience pelvic pain during the first 10 days after the injection of methotrexate. Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, Nuprin), if not contraindicated, or a similar medication should relieve this pain. **If you have severe pain, or pain that does not respond to ibuprofen, you should call or come in to your doctor's office, or the Emergency Room.** It may be worrisome if you have pain after the first 10 days of therapy. If this occurs, a surgical procedure may need to be performed.