



## Ectopic Pregnancy

Ectopic pregnancy is a pregnancy that is not in the usual place within the uterus (womb) but develops outside the uterus. The most common place that ectopic pregnancy occurs is in one of the fallopian tubes. Rarely, an ectopic pregnancy takes place in the abdomen, ovary or cervix (neck of the uterus). These pregnancies will not develop normally and are associated with risks to the mother.

An ectopic pregnancy happens when a fertilised egg implants outside the uterus. This may be caused when the fallopian tube has been scarred, damaged or the shape is changed. Factors that can increase risks for an ectopic pregnancy include:

- History of fallopian tube infection such as pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), chlamydia and gonorrhoea
- Previous ectopic pregnancies
- Previous surgery on the fallopian tubes or in the pelvic area
- Medication used in fertility treatment
- Women who get pregnant while an intrauterine device (IUD) is in place

If you have an ectopic pregnancy you may experience symptoms of pregnancy, including absence of menstrual periods (amenorrhea), breast pain, lower back pain, nausea, as well as abnormal bleeding, lower abdominal or pelvic pain and mild cramping on one side of the pelvis. However, some ectopic pregnancies can be symptoms free.

The risks of an ectopic pregnancy are associated with it rupturing. If you have a ruptured ectopic pregnancy you may experience fainting, shoulder pain, intense pressure in the rectum, severe lower abdominal pain and low blood pressure.

Ectopic pregnancies are usually diagnosed with a combination of blood test(s) (often more than one) and a pelvic ultrasound.

Treatment for an ectopic pregnancy depends on the size and location of the pregnancy. Treatment options include non-surgical with medication, or surgical methods. Your situation at the time of diagnosis will determine which method of treatment is more appropriate for you.

Women who have had one ectopic pregnancy are at a higher risk of having a recurrent ectopic pregnancy. However the chances of a future pregnancy developing inside the uterus is still higher than another ectopic pregnancy. Therefore, when you do become pregnant again, it is important to have an early pregnancy scan to ensure that the pregnancy is developing in the right place.