

# Treating a pregnancy outside the uterus with medication

## Methotrexate



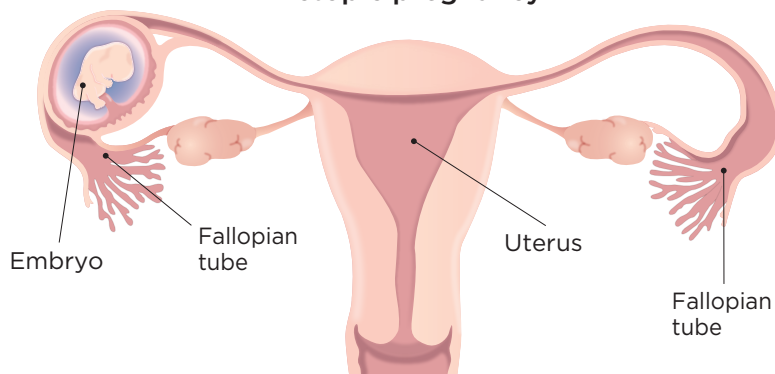
You have a pregnancy that is outside the uterus (ectopic pregnancy). You need to take medication to stop it. This fact sheet explains how this treatment works and the precautions to take afterwards.

### What is an ectopic pregnancy?

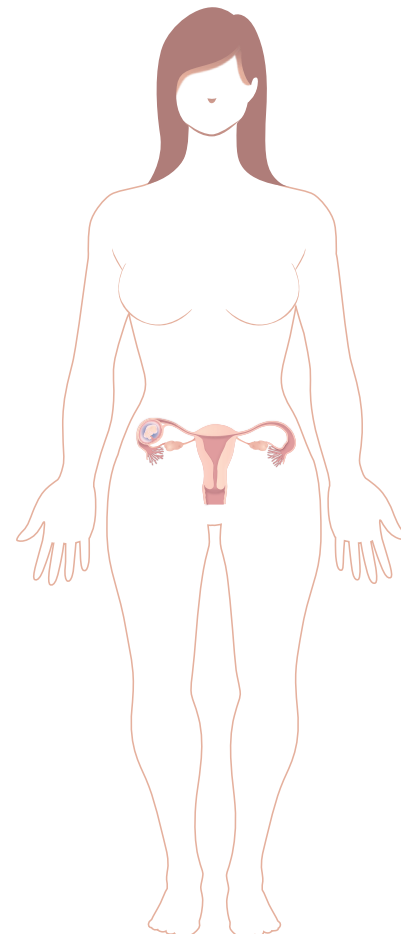
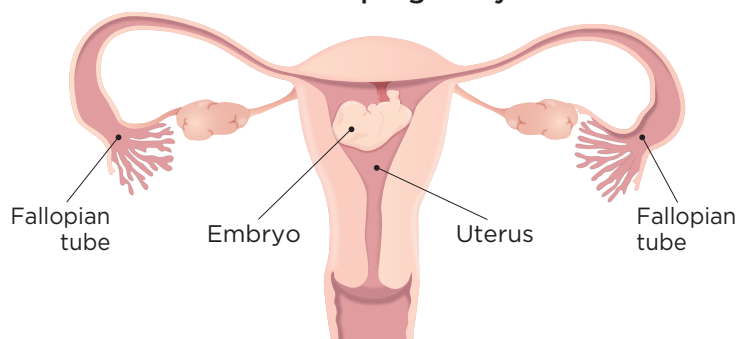
In a normal pregnancy, the embryo grows in the uterus. In an ectopic pregnancy, the embryo is outside the uterus. Most often, it's in the Fallopian tube. As the embryo grows, the tube stretches, causing pain.

Without treatment, the tube eventually bursts and surgery is needed. If the ectopic pregnancy is discovered in time, it can be stopped without danger using a medication: methotrexate.

**Ectopic pregnancy**



**Normal pregnancy**



## How does the medication work?

It stops the development of cells that multiply quickly, like those of the embryo. The cells die and disappear.

## How is the medication administered?

It is injected into the buttock muscle. Your doctor will calculate the proper dose for your height and weight. If your blood type is Rh-negative, you will also need an injection called WinRho. This prevents your body from producing antibodies that could complicate a future pregnancy.

## What is the follow-up afterwards?

One week after the injection, the pregnancy hormones in your blood will be measured to see if gestation has stopped. Sometimes a second injection of medication is needed.

After that, you'll have blood tests once a week until there are no more hormones. This usually takes 4 to 6 weeks, and sometimes even a few months.

Your next period should start 4 to 6 weeks after the hormones have disappeared.

## What are the side effects?

After the injection, you may experience:

- Mild abdominal pain (cramps) that can last from half a day up to 4 days.
- Light vaginal bleeding for several days to a few weeks.
- Heartburn.
- Mouth sores for several days.
- Mild skin rashes (such as hives).
- Damage to the liver or blood cells (rare).



## What signs should I watch for?

If you have one of the following symptoms, call your doctor or go to the emergency room as soon as possible:

- very strong pain
- heavy bleeding

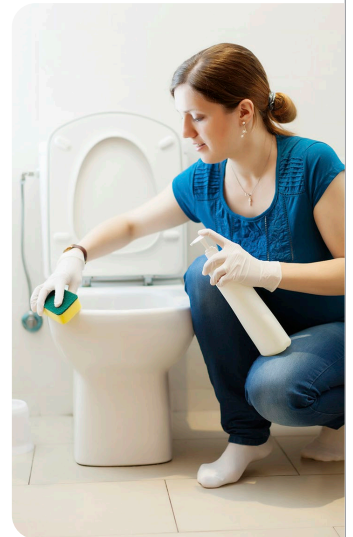
If you have any other symptom that worries you, call the CHUM Fertility Clinic (see the end of this fact sheet) or call **8-1-1**.

## Are there precautions I should take after the injection?

Methotrexate can also destroy normal cells. No person or animal should come into contact with any of your bodily fluids and organic matter (urine, feces, vomit). You can, however, hug and kiss your loved ones without worry.

Take the following precautions with your bodily fluids and organic matter for 4 days after the injection:

- Flush the toilet twice to dispose of them properly.
- Wear gloves to clean any splashing.
- If anyone comes in contact with these materials, they should wash thoroughly with soap and water.
- Any clothing soiled by these materials should be washed twice before being worn again.
- Dispose of your sanitary napkins in a closed bag in the garbage outside the house.



## Other precautions to take after the injection

- > Don't have sex for 2 weeks. After that, use birth control until your follow-up is complete or as advised by your doctor.
- > Don't take any vitamins with folic acid or antibiotics for 48 hours or as directed by your doctor. They may prevent the medicine from working.
- > Wait 3 months before trying another pregnancy.
- > Don't take anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen (Advil) for 2 days. You can take acetaminophen (Tylenol).
- > Avoid alcohol for 7 days.
- > Avoid the sun for 2 weeks. Then use sunscreen for the next month.
- > Don't breastfeed for 4 days.



## Is it normal for my morale to be affected?

Yes. In many women, it takes longer for the morale to recover than for the body. Feelings of loss can be very strong.

You and your partner may be grieving without expressing it in the same way. If either of you is having trouble dealing with the feelings caused by the loss, talk to your health care team.



## Who can I contact for help or to ask questions?

Call the Fertility Clinic.

> 514 890-8309

Outside of business hours, call 8-1-1.



### USEFUL RESOURCES

To learn more about pregnancy, delivery, or follow-up care, visit our website.



Videos, other fact sheets, and more resources are available at:

[centredesnaissanceschum.com](http://centredesnaissanceschum.com)



### Questions




### Resource people and contacts


*The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.*

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal  
[chumontreal.qc.ca](http://chumontreal.qc.ca)