

Conservative management of ectopic pregnancy

This leaflet explains more about conservative management of your ectopic pregnancy. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is conservative management of ectopic pregnancy

Conservative management of your ectopic pregnancy means we wait for the pregnancy to stop developing naturally, without any medical or surgical intervention.

Are there any alternatives?

Your pregnancy hormone (bHCG) levels will tell us if you are safe to have conservative management. If it is not safe for you to be managed in this way, your care team will discuss other options with you, which include medical and surgical treatment.

What happens during conservative management?

You will be monitored closely throughout this time to ensure that the ectopic pregnancy is reducing in size. This will involve regular blood tests, usually every 5-7 days, to check your hormone levels. Until your hormone levels are back to normal there is still a risk that medical or surgical treatment may be required.

It is difficult to predict how many times you will have to have your blood taken; some women may only have two or three blood tests, others will have more over the course of a few weeks. Your treatment is considered complete when your hormone (bHCG) level falls below 25iu/L, or you have a negative pregnancy test. Your nurse will advise you when this has occurred.

You are advised to avoid sexual intercourse and travel abroad during your treatment but please speak to your nurse for further information.

If you experience any of the following symptoms or feelings you must go to your nearest hospital without delay, calling 999 for an ambulance if necessary:

- one-sided abdominal pain that is worsening and not controlled by the painkillers you are taking
- increasing pain in your lower abdomen/tummy that is not controlled by regular painkillers
- shoulder tip pain – pain or discomfort where your shoulder ends and your arm begins
- vaginal bleeding that is getting heavier, continuous or with large blood clots
- fever or temperature above 37.5°C
- offensive/bad smelling or itchy vaginal discharge
- dizziness or fainting.

What happens after conservative management?

If your cycle is usually regular, your period is likely to return in four to six weeks. This first period may be lighter or heavier than normal, and it can sometimes take up to three months for your period to get back to normal.

Most women who have an ectopic pregnancy go on to have normal pregnancies in the future, however there is an increased risk of having another ectopic pregnancy. Your nurse can advise you on how to be referred for a tubal patency test to make sure your fallopian tubes are healthy before trying to fall pregnant again if you would like this.

It is very important that in all future pregnancies you have an early scan (at approximately six weeks). Our Early Pregnancy and Gynaecology Unit (EPAGU) have a weekly scanning list for women who need this, and we will be happy to give you an appointment if you call (with your last menstrual period date) when you are newly pregnant (see contact details below).

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the EPAGU on 020 7188 0864

- Monday to Friday: 8.30am–6.30pm
- Weekends and bank holidays: 9.30am–3.15pm.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk
t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk