What is an ectopic pregnancy?
An ectopic pregnancy occurs when the pregnancy develops outside of the uterus (womb).
The most common site for an ectopic pregnancy is the fallopian tube.

What is methotrexate?
A pregnancy is made up of cells which are dividing and growing quickly. Methotrexate is a strong medication that works by stopping this division and growth.

Methotrexate can also be used to treat some ectopic pregnancies, including those that have implanted in the cervix (neck of the womb) or the cornua (entrance to the fallopian tube).

Why have I been offered methotrexate treatment?
- You are in the early stages of pregnancy
- Your blood test has shown that your pregnancy hormone is above a certain level
- Your ultrasound scan shows there is no pregnancy inside your uterus
- You have no complaints of abdominal (tummy) pain and your medical condition is stable

What does the treatment involve?
We will take blood tests to confirm that your liver and kidneys are working normally.
The methotrexate will then be given as a single injection into a muscle (usually your buttock).

Approximately 15% (15 out of 100) of women may need a second injection one week later if their pregnancy hormone level is not falling fast enough.

Will I need to stay in hospital?
No, but you will need to stay in hospital for one hour after the injection.
Will I need to return to the hospital?

Yes, it is very important that you attend for regular check-ups. At each visit you will be asked how you are feeling and if you have any abdominal pain. A blood sample will be taken to check your pregnancy hormone level.

The visits will be every three days during the first week. After the first week, your visits may be reduced to once a week if your pregnancy hormone level is falling satisfactorily.

How long will I need to keep visiting the hospital?

This will depend on how quickly your pregnancy hormone level falls. Usually it takes between 3 to 4 weeks to fall completely. The higher the first pregnancy hormone level, the longer it will take.

When should I return to hospital?

At each visit you will be told when your next appointment is. You may be asked to telephone the ward for your blood test result and to confirm the date of your next appointment.

Do I need to take any special precautions?

Yes, please follow the advice below:

- **Do not** have sexual intercourse until you have been discharged from the hospital
- Avoid alcohol during the first week after your treatment
- Avoid taking vitamin supplements, especially those containing folic acid, until 3 months after your last dose of Methotrexate
- **Do not** take anti-inflammatory medication, such as ibuprofen or aspirin, until you have been discharged from the hospital
- Please see your GP to discuss re-starting any regular medication that you normally take but had to stop in pregnancy

What are the side effects?

Most common side effects include:

- **Pelvic or abdominal pain**: This is the most common side effect and can occur 3 to 7 days after your methotrexate injection. This affects up to 6 out of 10 women having this treatment. Pain relief such as paracetamol can help.
- **Vaginal bleeding**: This might occur until your treatment is completed.

Less common side effects include:

- **Nausea** (feeling sick)
- **Diarrhoea**
- **Soreness or ulcers in the mouth**
What should I do if I am worried about my pain or vaginal bleeding at home?

You should contact the hospital immediately if you have:

- Severe or constant pelvic or abdominal pain
- Heavy vaginal bleeding (soaking more than one sanitary towel per hour)

Will I still need an operation?

Approximately 7% (7 out of 100) of women will still need an operation.

You may need an operation if:

- Your pregnancy hormone levels do not fall
- You begin to bleed internally from your pregnancy
- Your ultrasound scan shows that the pregnancy is getting bigger

This will be discussed with you before your treatment starts.

What about planning for future pregnancies?

It is possible to become pregnant immediately after this treatment.

You are advised to wait for 3 to 6 months after the treatment before trying for another pregnancy. This allows for the methotrexate to have cleared from your body, which can take up to 3 months.

You are then advised to start taking Folic Acid 400 micrograms (which is recommended for 3 months before conception and then for the first 12 weeks of pregnancy).

If you want any advice on contraception, the nurses will be happy to discuss this with you.

There is no evidence to show that methotrexate causes any problems to future pregnancies.

What is the chance of another ectopic pregnancy?

There is a small risk of another ectopic pregnancy (10 - 15% of future pregnancies). The doctor or nurse will be happy to discuss this with you.

Will I need any further investigations?

An hysterosalpingogram (x-ray which uses a dye to assess your fallopian tubes) may be arranged. This will be discussed with you once the treatment is completed.

Will I need to have a follow up appointment?

If your treatment is successful you will not need to see a doctor for a follow up appointment.

How will I feel afterwards?

Women may experience a wide range of emotions following an ectopic pregnancy. Further information, advice and support is available at www/miscarriageassociation.org.uk
Who can I contact if I have any questions?

If you need any further information then please do not hesitate to contact:

- Gynaecology Ward G1: 0114 226 8225