



## Ectopic Pregnancy

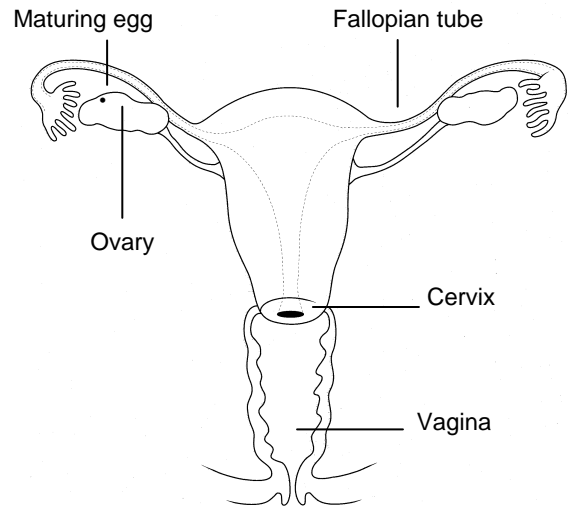
### What is an ectopic pregnancy?

"Ectopic" is Latin for "in the wrong place." An ectopic pregnancy, also referred to as tubal pregnancy, occurs when a developing embryo plants itself outside the uterus. Most ectopic pregnancies are found in the fallopian tube, but they can occur at other pelvic sites such as the ovary, cervix, or abdominal cavity. The embryo cannot survive outside the uterus and must be removed to prevent maternal complications. This type of pregnancy is potentially dangerous and requires immediate treatment.

### What causes an ectopic pregnancy?

An ectopic pregnancy occurs when a fertilized egg is slowed or blocked in some way as it travels from the ovary to the uterus. There are associated risk factors that put some women at a higher risk for an ectopic pregnancy:

- previous pelvic infections
- fibroids in the uterus, which block the tube's entrance to the uterus
- use of a non-hormonal intrauterine device (IUD)
- previous tubal pregnancy or uterine surgery
- in-vitro fertilization
- history of endometriosis
- adhesions (band of scar tissue) from previous abdominal surgery
- repeated occurrence of sexually transmitted infections
- smoking



### What are the signs and symptoms of an ectopic pregnancy?

An ectopic pregnancy may be characterized by:

- missed menstrual period or an abnormally light or abnormally heavy period
- any unexplained vaginal spotting
- low abdominal cramping, especially on one side of the abdomen
- weakness, dizziness associated with any of the above symptoms

Early detection of an ectopic pregnancy is imperative. If a tubal pregnancy is allowed to continue, it may rupture the fallopian tube and cause massive bleeding. This can result in a decrease in fertility and even death.

With appropriate treatment, most women are able to have a normal pregnancy after an ectopic pregnancy; but they should be monitored carefully when trying to conceive in the future.

If you are a registered University of Illinois student and you have questions or concerns, or need to make an appointment, please call: **Dial-A-Nurse at 333-2700**

If you are concerned about any difference in your treatment plan and the information in this handout, you are advised to contact your health care provider.

Visit the McKinley Health Center Web site at: <http://www.mckinley.uiuc.edu>