Methotrexate

Dear patient,

Unfortunately, you were diagnosed with an ectopic pregnancy. To avoid surgical intervention, you will be administered Methotrexate. We will explain how this works in this leaflet.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions after reading the leaflet.

The doctors and staff of the gynaecology department

1 Treatment

A pregnancy outside the uterus is called an ectopic pregnancy or a pregnancy of unknown location. No baby can be born from an ectopic pregnancy, and the pregnancy can even be dangerous. Because the pregnancy hormone is in your blood and is not dropping sufficiently, you will be given treatment with Methotrexate (MTX).

MTX is a cytostatic drug that is administered by injection. It causes rapidly growing pregnancy tissue, such as the placenta, to break down. That way, the body clears the tissue itself. Treatment with MTX is less invasive than surgery. MTX does not affect fertility or any future pregnancies that commence from three months after administration.

2 Administration

MTX is administered via a single injection into the gluteal muscle. This injection is given by a nurse in the hospital. One injection may not be effective enough. 15% of patients need more than one dose.

3 Results

In most cases, the administration of MTX is sufficient to terminate the ectopic pregnancy. Only 10% of patients require surgical intervention: 7% because of a ruptured fallopian tube and 3% because there is no effect or an insufficient effect after two doses of MTX.

4 Side effects

Possible side effects:
- an irritated mouth (ulcers)
- irritated eyes (tears, redness)
- skin rash
- gastrointestinal complaints

You can prevent or reduce these side effects by paying extra attention to good oral hygiene in the first week after administration, avoiding exposure to direct sunlight, drinking enough fluids and avoiding alcoholic beverages. Any side effects last about a week on average.

5 Abdominal pain

The treatment may cause abdominal pain. This often starts six to seven days after the start of treatment because there is swelling in the fallopian tube where the ectopic pregnancy is located. The abdominal pain usually stops within a few days.

The painkiller you can take is paracetamol (e.g. Dafalgan, Perdolan, etc.). Do not use any other painkillers.

If you have severe lower abdominal pain or blood loss, contact the gynaecology department (051/23 63 96) or the emergency department (051/23 77 03). Also call us if you have any side effects that you are worried about.

6 Rules

Treatment with MTX involves a few rules:

- Drink at least 1.5 litres of water or tea a day. This is necessary so that you urinate enough and the MTX is flushed from your body quickly.
- For seven days, minimal residues of this product remain in your body, hence in urine and bowel movements. When visiting the toilet, you should therefore always flush twice with the seat closed. Then wash your hands thoroughly. If you have two toilets, always use the same one and let your family members use another toilet. If you only have one toilet, always flush twice with the lid closed.
- You may touch your loved ones (partner, children, and others) during your treatment; you are not contagious.
- After the injection, abstain from sexual contact for seven days to avoid bleeding from the ectopic pregnancy.
- Do not engage in intense exercise, and avoid bright sunlight for seven days after injection.
- Use only paracetamol as a painkiller. A number of medicines interact with Methotrexate and should therefore be avoided for the first week after administration:
  - Aspirin
  - Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory analgesics (e.g. ibuprofen, Voltaren, Brufen)
  - Antibiotics
  - Proton pump inhibitors (e.g. omeprazole, Nexium, Pantomed)

Come in weekly for a blood draw so we can monitor pregnancy hormone levels. On average, it takes five weeks until the value is completely reduced.

Do not become pregnant within three months of treatment. MTX is a cytostatic drug and may still be in the egg cells. This can damage the foetus during a new pregnancy. Therefore, use contraception, such as a condom or the pill. After three months, the MTX is out of the body and another pregnancy is not a problem.

7 Psychological strain

The administration of MTX can also be psychologically demanding for you and your partner. Everyone processes their emotions in their own way, but it is important not to withdraw while processing this. Keep communicating with those close to you/you and your partner. Also, do not hesitate to seek professional help if you need it. You will find the contact details of the fertility/gynaecology department psychologist at the back of the leaflet.

8 Cost

Methotrexate injection is fully reimbursed by the health insurance company. You only pay the co-payment fee for consultations and blood draws. If you would like more information, please contact the invoicing department on 051/23 76 66 (8 a.m.-12 p.m. and 1 p.m.-5 p.m.) or factuur@azdelta.be.

Notes

Contact

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Fertility Centre

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0520 6458-EN **This brochure is revised on 09/06/2026**