

ectopic pregnancy  
[created by Paul Young  
02/10/07]

definition

- an ectopic pregnancy is a fertilised ovum which implants outside the lining of the uterus

aetiology

risk factors for ectopic pregnancy include:  
- history of tubal ligation  
- history of ectopic pregnancy  
- prior tubal infection  
- fallopian and endometrial anomalies  
- fertility drugs  
- endometriosis  
- IUCDs

NB: 50% of patients with proven ectopic pregnancy have no risk factors

rate of coexistent intrauterine & ectopic pregnancy is about 1/5000 in patients not on fertility treatment

symptoms

- important things from the history are:  
1. presence & amount of PV bleeding (occurs in 80%)  
2. location of pain  
3. risk factors for ectopic pregnancy  
4. LMP  
5. shoulder pain (suggests large amount of peritoneal blood)  
6. faintness

- most people with ectopic (97%) present with abdominal or pelvic pain

signs

- most important part of the examination is the pelvic. Look for:  
1. adnexal tenderness & masses  
2. state of cervix & material passing through it (large amount of blood is inconsistent with ectopic pregnancy)  
- listen for fetal heart tones (they are almost never heard in ectopic)

investigation

perform MSU

- perform a pregnancy test (a negative urine test essentially excludes ectopic pregnancy - it has a negative predictive value of 99%)  
perform blood tests for:  
- exclusion of other causes of abdominal pain  
- rhesus status

- most important test is a transvaginal pelvic USS  
- if bHCG is <1200 an IUP is seen on only 20% of scans  
- if bHCG is >1200 and there is no IUP seen this is very good evidence of an ectopic pregnancy  
- serial bHCG is useful in patients with non-diagnostic scans

- normal increase in bHCG in the 1st trimester is 1.66Xs every two days. 20% of normal pregnancies do not show this rise & 20% of ectopics show this rise

treatment

- treat patients with haemorrhagic shock or peritonitis with fluid resuscitation & transfer to theatre

treatment options are:  
1. surgery. Used for:  
- unstable patients  
- large ectopics  
- patients with peritonitis  
2. methotrexate. Used for:  
- no peritonitis  
- ectopic <3.5cm  
- no free fluid on USS  
- ability to closely monitor as an outpatient