

Diseases & Conditions

Ectopic pregnancy

Request an appointment

- Symptoms & causes
- Diagnosis & treatment
- Doctors & departments

On this page

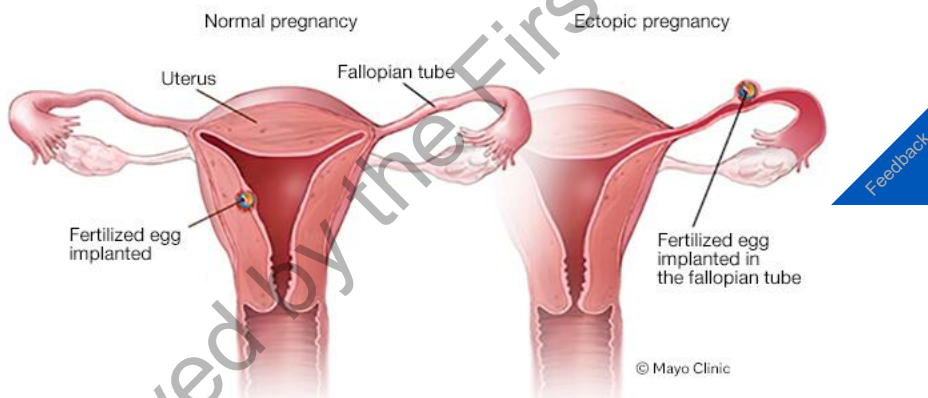
- Overview ↓
- Symptoms ↓
- When to see a doctor ↓
- Causes ↓
- Risk factors ↓
- Complications ↓
- Prevention ↓

Overview

Pregnancy begins with a fertilized egg. Normally, the fertilized egg attaches to the lining of the uterus. An ectopic pregnancy occurs when a fertilized egg implants and grows outside the main cavity of the uterus.

An ectopic pregnancy most often occurs in a fallopian tube, which carries eggs from the ovaries to the uterus. This type of ectopic pregnancy is called a tubal pregnancy. Sometimes, an ectopic pregnancy occurs in other areas of the body, such as the ovary, abdominal cavity or the lower part of the uterus (cervix), which connects to the vagina.

An ectopic pregnancy can't proceed normally. The fertilized egg can't survive, and the growing tissue may cause life-threatening bleeding, if left untreated.



Ectopic pregnancy

In a healthy pregnancy, the fertilized egg attaches itself to the lining of the uterus. In an ectopic pregnancy, the egg attaches itself somewhere outside the uterus usually to the inside of a fallopian tube.

Products & Services

[A Book: Mayo Clinic Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy](#)

[A Book: Your Guide to Miscarriage and Pregnancy Loss](#)

Symptoms

You may not notice any symptoms at first. However, some women who have an ectopic pregnancy have the usual early signs or symptoms of pregnancy — a missed period, breast tenderness and nausea.

If you take a pregnancy test, the result will be positive. Still, an ectopic pregnancy can't continue as normal.

As the fertilized egg grows in the improper place, signs and symptoms become more noticeable.

Early warning of ectopic pregnancy

Often, the first warning signs of an ectopic pregnancy are light vaginal bleeding and pelvic pain.

If blood leaks from the fallopian tube, you may feel shoulder pain or an urge to have a bowel movement. Your specific symptoms depend on where the blood collects and which nerves are irritated.

Emergency symptoms

If the fertilized egg continues to grow in the fallopian tube, it can cause the tube to rupture. Heavy bleeding inside the abdomen is likely. Symptoms of this life-threatening event include extreme lightheadedness, fainting and shock.

When to see a doctor

Seek emergency medical help if you have any signs or symptoms of an ectopic pregnancy, including:

- Severe abdominal or pelvic pain accompanied by vaginal bleeding
- Extreme lightheadedness or fainting
- Shoulder pain

[Request an appointment](#)

From Mayo Clinic to your inbox

Sign up for free and stay up to date on research advancements, health tips, current health topics, and expertise on managing health. [Click here for an email preview.](#)

Email *

Subscribe!

[Learn more about Mayo Clinic's use of data.](#) ▾

Feedback

Causes

A tubal pregnancy — the most common type of ectopic pregnancy — happens when a fertilized egg gets stuck on its way to the uterus, often because the fallopian tube is damaged by inflammation or is misshapen. Hormonal imbalances or abnormal

development of the fertilized egg also might play a role.

Risk factors

Some things that make you more likely to have an ectopic pregnancy are:

- **Previous ectopic pregnancy.** If you've had this type of pregnancy before, you're more likely to have another.
 - **Inflammation or infection.** Sexually transmitted infections, such as gonorrhea or chlamydia, can cause inflammation in the tubes and other nearby organs, and increase your risk of an ectopic pregnancy.
 - **Fertility treatments.** Some research suggests that women who have in vitro fertilization (IVF) or similar treatments are more likely to have an ectopic pregnancy. Infertility itself may also raise your risk.
 - **Tubal surgery.** Surgery to correct a closed or damaged fallopian tube can increase the risk of an ectopic pregnancy.
 - **Choice of birth control.** The chance of getting pregnant while using an intrauterine device (IUD) is rare. However, if you do get pregnant with an intrauterine device (IUD) in place, it's more likely to be ectopic. Tubal ligation, a permanent method of birth control commonly known as "having your tubes tied," also raises your risk, if you become pregnant after this procedure.
 - **Smoking.** Cigarette smoking just before you get pregnant can increase the risk of an ectopic pregnancy. The more you smoke, the greater the risk.
-

Complications

An ectopic pregnancy can cause your fallopian tube to burst open. Without treatment, the ruptured tube can lead to life-threatening bleeding.

Prevention

There's no way to prevent an ectopic pregnancy, but here are some ways to decrease your risk:

- Limiting the number of sexual partners and using a condom during sex helps to prevent sexually transmitted infections and may reduce the risk of pelvic inflammatory disease.
- Don't smoke. If you do, quit before you try to get pregnant.

[Request an appointment](#)

By Mayo Clinic Staff

Mar 12, 2022

 [Print](#)

[Show References](#) 

Diagnosis & treatment

Diseases & Conditions

- > Ectopic pregnancy symptoms & causes

More Information

[Ectopic pregnancy](#)

Associated Procedures

[Ultrasound](#)

Products & Services

[A Book: Mayo Clinic Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy](#)

[A Book: Your Guide to Miscarriage and Pregnancy Loss](#)

CON-20372070

Advertisement

Mayo Clinic does not endorse companies or products. Advertising revenue supports our not-for-profit mission.

Advertising & Sponsorship

[Policy](#) | [Opportunities](#) | [Ad Choices](#)

Mayo Clinic Press

Check out these best-sellers and special offers on books and newsletters from [Mayo Clinic Press](#).

[Mayo Clinic on Incontinence](#)

[The Essential Diabetes Book](#)

[Mayo Clinic on Hearing and Balance](#)

[FREE Mayo Clinic Diet Assessment](#)

Your gift holds great power – donate today!

Make your tax-deductible gift and be a part of the cutting-edge research and care that's changing medicine.

Donate

Find a doctor

Explore careers

Sign up for free e-newsletters

About Mayo Clinic

About this Site

Contact Us

Locations

Health Information Policy

Media Requests

News Network

Medical Professionals

AskMayoExpert

Clinical Trials

Mayo Clinic Alumni Association

Refer a Patient

Businesses

Executive Health Program

Students

Degree Programs

Admissions Requirements

Student & Faculty Portal

Researchers

Research Faculty

Laboratories

International Patients

Appointments

Financial Services

International Locations & Offices

Charitable Care & Financial Assistance

Community Health Needs Assessment

Financial Assistance Documents – Arizona

Financial Assistance Documents – Florida

Financial Assistance Documents – Minnesota

Feedback

Last viewed by the First Circuit Library on 10/25/2023

[International Business Collaborations](#)

[Facilities & Real Estate](#)

[Supplier Information](#)

Follow Mayo Clinic

Get the Mayo Clinic app



[Terms & Conditions](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Notice of Privacy Practices](#)

[Accessibility Statement](#)

[Advertising & Sponsorship Policy](#)

[Site Map](#)

© 1998-2023 Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER). All rights reserved.

Language: [English](#) ▼



Last viewed by the First Circuit Library on 10/25/2023