



Background

- The Ectopic Pregnancy Trust was launched in 1998. It was founded by Tina Jones, Ruth and John Winter, parents of Sophie Winter who died from a misdiagnosed Ectopic Pregnancy, Jane Griffiths MP, Julie Price and Professor James Walker, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at St. James University Hospital, Leeds.
- The current President is comedienne Jo Brand and Patrons are Amanda Redman, Michelle Gayle, Susan Penhaligon and Anna Walker. Trustees are Alex Peace-Gadsby (Chairman), Chris Woodward (Treasurer), Professor Tom Bourne, Dr Andrew Horne, Miss Julie Price, Caroline Foster, Dr Suzanne Hollamby and Kevin Walker.
- The charity's mission is to deliver information, education and support to those whose lives have been affected by ectopic pregnancy and to the professionals who care for them.
- It is the only organisation in the UK that focuses on this condition. It supplies hospitals with relevant information to hand to patients, receives 1.2 million website hits per year, facilitates over 16,000 support forum topics, responds to over 4000 emails and has a helpline that receives 3000 phone calls a year. It also represents the patients' voice, sitting on such panels as the government's NICE guideline for pain and bleeding in early pregnancy.
- The charity seeks to raise awareness about the condition through the media as earlier diagnosis enables the option of less invasive treatment methods, reducing the emotional trauma and often preserving a woman's fertility level.

What is an ectopic pregnancy?

- An ectopic pregnancy is a pregnancy that has implanted outside the uterus. The most common site for this is in the fallopian tube, which transports the embryo (egg) from the ovary to the uterus. As the pregnancy grows and enlarges it causes pain and bleeding and, if not treated prior, will eventually rupture and cause internal haemorrhaging.
- 1 in 80 pregnancies are ectopic.
- Approximately 12,000 women suffer an ectopic pregnancy each year but, due to how statistics are recorded, this is thought to be a gross underestimation.
- Approximately 5 women per year die of an ectopic pregnancy in the UK. It is the leading cause of death in early pregnancy.

What are the most common causes?

The most common cause is damage to the fallopian tube causing blockage or narrowing so the eggs cannot be wafted into the womb. This damage can be as a result of any previous abdominal surgery or condition such as a caesarean section, appendicitis, endometriosis, Chlamydia or from other pelvic infections. In many instances the cause is unknown.

What are the symptoms?

Any sexually active woman of childbearing age with the following symptoms may be suspected of having an ectopic pregnancy: abdominal pain, shoulder tip-pain, abnormal or unusual bleeding, a missed or late period, bladder or bowel problems or collapse.

How is it treated?

Ectopic pregnancies cannot be saved. However, if early diagnosis can be achieved, and the appropriate facilities available, then less invasive surgery – or no surgery at all – can be used to manage the condition. Early diagnosis and good care reduces physical and emotional trauma and improves future fertility.

What can be done?

- An increased awareness amongst health professionals and the public will lead to earlier referral and diagnosis.
- The development of Early Pregnancy Units for women with early pregnancy problems will allow easy and quick access to diagnostic services and reduce the number of emergency admissions.
- An early scan to confirm the baby is in the womb can have a dramatic effect and the Trust considers all women with a history of ectopic pregnancy should be scanned at between 6 and 7 weeks in subsequent pregnancies. The Trust considers scanning facilities should be readily accessible 7 days per week.
- Screening amongst young people for sexually transmitted infection and improved education will dramatically reduce the numbers of ectopic pregnancies.
- Many of these services already exist in parts of the country, but there needs to be an increase in provision of facilities and an improved integration between services.

Further information

- The Trust is happy to offer newsrooms across the country help in dealing with stories on early pregnancy complications, ectopic pregnancy and baby loss and can provide senior medical experts and members of the charity for comment. The Trust can also put journalists in touch with families whose lives have been affected by ectopic pregnancy and baby loss and who can give a first-hand account of the condition and its legacy, as well as being able to share some heart-warming stories of hope following ectopic pregnancy.
- For more detailed information, please visit our website at www.ectopic.org.uk, alternatively call our administration line on 020 3585 1420 or email us at ept@ectopic.org.uk. You can write to us at: The Ectopic Pregnancy Trust, 2nd Floor, Golden Jubilee Wing, King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London. SE5 9RS.