

Cornual Ectopic Pregnancy

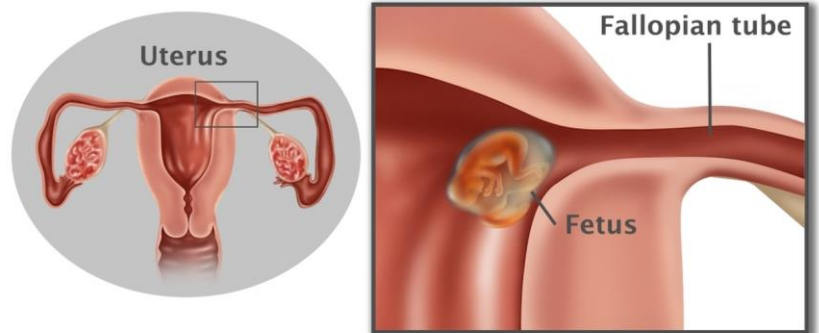
At a glance

- A pregnancy located in the corner of the uterus near the opening of the fallopian tube
- Diagnosis is made with ultrasound
- Once diagnosed, early management and close monitoring are important to avoid serious complications

What is a cornual pregnancy?

An ectopic pregnancy is a pregnancy that occurs outside the uterine cavity. In very rare cases, the pregnancy can implant near the opening of the tube into the uterus, also known as the uterine cornua. Cornual pregnancies account for 2-3% of all ectopic pregnancies and have an increased incidence after in vitro fertilization (IVF). Other risk factors include a history of pelvic infection, endometriosis, previous pelvic surgery, and uterine anomalies.

Cornual/Interstitial Ectopic Pregnancy



Symptoms

- Missed menstrual cycle
- Vaginal bleeding
- Pain in the lower abdomen, pelvis, or back
- Dizziness or weakness

How is a cornual pregnancy diagnosed?

Women who are pregnant and experiencing any of the above symptoms or those at risk for ectopic pregnancy should have a transvaginal ultrasound to determine the location of the pregnancy. Your doctor will insert an ultrasound probe through the vagina to examine the uterus, tubes and ovaries to evaluate the pregnancy location. 3-D ultrasonography may be used as an additional imaging modality that can aid in diagnosis.

Blood testing to determine their human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG) level, which is a hormone is produced during pregnancy, will be collected as well. This level will be monitored closely until pregnancy location and viability are verified.

How is a cornual pregnancy treated?

Management is determined by the exact pregnancy location, patient's symptoms, and future fertility plans. Medical management options such as methotrexate (an injection that stops the growth of the pregnancy) may be offered. This option is less invasive than surgery but does require close follow-up and requires a certain amount of time until the woman is able to try to conceive again. Some patients may require more than one dose of the medication for complete treatment, and occasionally the medication may not work.

Surgery

For women with a cornual ectopic who desire definitive management, surgery is the best option. This option also allows for the evaluation and treatment of any concomitant conditions which may contribute to infertility and abnormal pregnancy implantation.

A combined method of using both laparoscopy (use of a thin telescope with a lighted camera which is inserted into the abdomen) and hysteroscopy (a telescope with a lighted camera inserted into the uterus) has shown success in removal of the cornual pregnancy alone. In some cases, an incision into the uterus may be required for complete removal of the pregnancy, this is known as a cornuostomy. In rare cases, removal of the pregnancy alone could result in significant bleeding necessitating removal of the pregnancy along with the surrounding portion of the uterus, also known as a cornual resection. Rarely, if bleeding is severe, this may lead to a hysterectomy.

Type of surgery and outcome depends on the skill and experience of the surgeon and availability of proper instruments. The less invasive procedures have better outcomes, less tissue damage and pain, faster recovery and less waiting time for attempt for future conception. The caveat is finding the right surgeon.

Risks of surgery are low but like any surgery include blood loss, infection, and damage to surrounding structures.