

An ectopic pregnancy is an abnormal kind of pregnancy, which occurs outside the uterus. The term "ectopic" was adapted from the Greek word, ektopos, which means "out of place". It is a major cause of maternal morbidity and mortality when misdiagnosed or left untreated, and accounts for as much as 9% of maternal death in this USA. The condition is thought to be an error or flaw of the human reproductive physiology, which allows the fertilized egg to implant and grow outside its natural location.

Studies has shown that approximately 1-2% of pregnancies are ectopic and 97% of these occur in the fallopian tube (so called tubal pregnancies). Less commonly, the ectopic pregnancy is in cervical, ovarian, or intra-abdominal sites. Some conditions can blocks or slows down the normal way of a fertilized egg through the fallopian tube to the uterus. It is believed that the fertilized egg gets stuck on its way and that the most common cause is a scarred, damaged or misshapen tube. The abnormally implanted gestation grows and draws its blood supply from the site of implantation. As the gestation enlarges, it creates the potential for organ rupture because only the uterine cavity is designed to expand and accommodate fetal development. The rupture can result in massive internal hemorrhage that threatens the mother's life unless promptly diagnosed and treated. In addition to the immediate morbidity caused by ectopic pregnancy, the woman's future ability to reproduce may be adversely affected as well.

Half of ectopic pregnancies resolves without treatment. These are the tubal abortions. Today the advent of methotrexate treatment for ectopic pregnancy has reduced the need for surgery; however, surgical intervention is still required in case of rupture or danger of doing so. Some risk factors are belived to increase the incidence of ectopic pregnancy more than others. These include Pelvic inflammatory disease and Assisted reproductive methods. Recent studies has shown that smoking contributes to this increase. Researchers has therefore concluded that awareness of the role of smoking in public health is important for prevention of ectopic pregnancy.