

ECTOPIC PREGNANCIES

Jab, pills to save mothers

■ **Cathy O'Leary**
Medical Editor

Australian doctors believe they have found a relatively simple way to treat one of the most dangerous complications in expectant mothers — ectopic pregnancies.

Instead of urgent surgery to save the mother, ectopic pregnancies could be safely treated with an injection and seven tablets, obstetric researchers pioneering the new technique say.

They will present their findings next week at the Perth research symposium the Stars Event hosted by WA's Women and Infants Research Foundation.

Professor Stephen Tong, from the University of Melbourne, said ectopic pregnancies were when the embryo developed outside the womb, typically in a fallopian tube but in an old caesarean scar.

They happened in one to 2 per cent of pregnancies and resulted in miscarriage but could also be dangerous for the mother.

It required immediate surgery and sometimes caused permanent damage to the fallopian tube and affect future pregnancies.

An initial trial showed promise in treating the complication without surgery, even in a more advanced pregnancy. The next phase will be trials in 20 British hospitals and if successful could change treatment globally.

Professor Tong will also talk about a new blood test that could single out babies at risk of stillbirth.

The test picked up blood signals suggesting embryo stress, so birth could be induced at a safer time.

"These treatments have the potential to save the lives of mothers and babies," Professor Tong said.

Researchers will also talk about their work into preventing gestational diabetes and preterm births.

The Stars Event is at the University of WA Club on Wednesday at 6pm. Register at wirf.com.au/stars2015