



Vaginal bleeding and pain in early pregnancy

This leaflet is for patients who have been referred to the Early Pregnancy Unit with vaginal bleeding and pain in early pregnancy.

What does vaginal bleeding and pain mean for me?

Vaginal bleeding and/or cramping pain in the early stages of pregnancy are common and do not always mean that there is a problem. However, bleeding and/or pain can be a warning sign of a miscarriage or less commonly, of other complications of early pregnancy. Sadly, if the bleeding is because the pregnancy is miscarrying, it is very unlikely indeed that anything can be done to stop this.

What happens next?

You have been referred to the Early Pregnancy Unit (EPU). A team member will contact you via the telephone – please be aware this will show as being from a withheld number. The unit is open 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday. They will discuss your symptoms and if needed arrange an appointment and scan.

What if my symptoms get worse?

If you have any of the following symptoms, please do not wait for a call but attend A&E urgently.

- Severe pain in your abdomen
- Pain shooting to your neck or shoulders
- Passing blood clots larger than your palm
- Bleeding that soaks a large pad more than every 30 minutes
- Feeling very dizzy or fainting

What could be causing bleeding and/or pain at this stage of pregnancy?

A threatened miscarriage: If you have had bleeding and/or pain but your ultrasound scan confirms that your pregnancy is progressing normally, this is known as a 'threatened miscarriage'. Many women who bleed at this stage of pregnancy go on to have a healthy baby but some will sadly still have a miscarriage despite a normal scan.

An early miscarriage: Unfortunately, bleeding and/or pain in early pregnancy can mean that you have had or are having a miscarriage. Sadly, early miscarriages are common. In the first three months, one in five women will have a miscarriage, for no apparent reason, following a positive pregnancy test. However, most miscarriages occur as a one-off event and there is a good chance of having a successful pregnancy in the future.

An ectopic pregnancy: When a pregnancy starts to grow outside the womb, it is called an ectopic pregnancy. In the UK, one in 90 pregnancies is ectopic. Your symptoms, scan findings

and blood tests might lead to a suspicion that you have an ectopic pregnancy. An ectopic pregnancy can pose a risk to your health. If this is suspected or confirmed, you will be offered treatment.

A pregnancy of unknown location (PUL): When you have a positive pregnancy test and your pregnancy cannot be seen clearly on ultrasound scan, it is known as PUL. This can happen with very small early pregnancies, miscarriages that have occurred before the scan takes place or ectopic pregnancies too small to see. Follow up tests will be arranged.

A molar pregnancy: This is an uncommon condition where the placenta is abnormal and the pregnancy does not develop properly. It affects only one in 700 pregnancies. A molar pregnancy is usually diagnosed when you have an ultrasound scan.

What will happen in the Early Pregnancy Unit?

Please be aware that the EPU is an urgent care service and that your appointment can take a few hours.

- You will have a urine pregnancy test to confirm that you are pregnant.
- You may need an ultrasound scan, this may be abdominal (external) or vaginal (internal) but both of these are safe in pregnancy.
- You may need blood tests for pregnancy hormone (HCG).
- You will be seen by a specialist nurse or doctor who will be able to answer any questions.
- You may need more than one follow up appointment to get a final diagnosis.

Who can I contact if I need more information?

If you have not received a call within two working days from your referral, then please call the EPU on **0118 322 7181**.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

Gynaecology Consultant (EPAGU), March 2022

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