

Bleeding in Early Pregnancy

In early pregnancy it is relatively common to experience bleeding or spotting. This can be a sign of miscarriage, however it doesn't always mean there is a problem and many women will go on to have a normal developing pregnancy.

In an on-going pregnancy, bleeding or spotting can continue over a number of weeks but this will not cause harm to the baby.

When will I have a scan?

We understand you may be anxious and feel that an ultrasound scan would provide answers or reassurance. However even in a normal developing pregnancy, an ultrasound scan before 6 weeks gestation may show very little or nothing at all and may result in unnecessary investigations causing further distress and anxiety. For that reason we do not provide or recommend a routine ultrasound scan to be performed in a pregnancy of below 6 weeks gestation.

What should I do or avoid whilst bleeding?

Women are often advised to take bed rest while bleeding, however, this seems to make little difference to the final outcome.

If you wish, you may return to work, once you feel happy to do so. We do advise that you avoid exercise and strenuous activities

To reduce the risk of infection we recommend that you use sanitary towels rather than tampons and avoid sexual intercourse. It is safe to resume sexual intercourse once the bleeding has stopped and at all other times during pregnancy.

What happens next?

If you are below 6 weeks gestation (6 weeks from the first day of your last period)

- If you have mild to moderate bleeding you will be discharged home with advice to repeat a urine pregnancy test in 10 days' time.
- If the test is positive and you are still bleeding or have any concerns, contact the Gynaecology Assessment Unit and an appointment will be made for assessment and ultrasound scan. If your symptoms have settled, contact your community midwife to arrange antenatal care.
- If test is negative sadly this will confirm that you have miscarried and no treatment is necessary. If you are still bleeding or have any other concerns, contact the Gynaecology Assessment Unit

If you are above 6 weeks gestation / uncertain of date of last period / experiencing pain or your medical history increases risk of ectopic (includes previous ectopic, tubal surgery)

- You will be referred to Gynaecology Assessment Unit for management plan.

When would I need to seek further medical advice?

After leaving hospital you must contact Gynaecology Assessment Unit if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Increasing abdominal pain
- Feel dizzy or lightheaded
- Bleeding becomes heavier /passing blood clots
- Raised temperature
- Offensive vaginal discharge

You need to be aware that due to variances in menstrual cycle, the date of your last period may not give an accurate representation of gestational age.

If you do experience severe pelvic / abdominal pain or heavy bleeding you must seek immediate medical advice.

Call 999 or go to your nearest Emergency Department if you feel unwell, collapse or have severe pain or bleeding.

Advice and Support

We hope that this information leaflet has answered your questions and provided you with some reassurance.

However, if you would like to talk things over further, please feel free to contact the nurses in the Gynaecology Assessment Unit for advice.

Contact number

Gynaecology Assessment Unit (GAU)

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August 2020