

Bleeding in early pregnancy

You may have experienced some bleeding and/or pain in the early part of your pregnancy which has resulted in you coming to the early pregnancy clinic. This leaflet is to give you some information about the bleeding you may have experienced and what happens next.

How common is bleeding in early pregnancy?

Bleeding during pregnancy is relatively common with around one in four women experiencing some bleeding, only around one in six women going on to have a miscarriage. If you have bleeding at any stage during your pregnancy, you should contact your midwife or GP immediately.

Normal activities of daily living do not cause miscarriage/pregnancy loss and in most cases, bleeding is not a sign of a serious problem. However, it is important (and reassuring) to make sure.

When is the most common time to see vaginal bleeding in early pregnancy?

In early pregnancy you might get some light bleeding when the fetus plants itself into the wall of your womb. This is also known as implantation bleeding, and often happens around the time that your first period after conception would have been due.

During the first three months of pregnancy, vaginal bleeding can be a sign of miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy; when the fetus starts to grow inside your fallopian tubes instead of your womb. This is why it is important that you are seen by your GP or in the clinic.

Most miscarriages occur during the first twelve weeks of pregnancy, and sadly, most cannot be prevented. Ectopic pregnancies are much less common than miscarriages, and only affect approximately one in 100 pregnancies. There are other less frequent causes of vaginal bleeding which can include bleeding from the neck of the womb (the cervix).

What investigations do I need if I have bleeding?

If you have bleeding in early pregnancy you may be referred to the Early Pregnancy Unit (EPU) for assessment. This will include a pregnancy test, a scan and possibly blood tests. In the very early stages of pregnancy the scan may need to be done vaginally. This is a safe and (usually) painless examination. Occasionally we may also need to do a vaginal examination.

Do I need any further investigations?

Hopefully the results of all these tests will be reassuring and your pregnancy will continue without any further problems. We often cannot give you a reason why the bleeding happened and we do not normally suggest any further tests. Further episodes of bleeding are unusual. If we do see what is causing the bleeding, it is possible that you will be asked to return to the clinic for a further scan.

If the scan does pick up a heartbeat and the baby appears to be the right size according to your dates, this can be very reassuring, even if you are still bleeding.

Research has shown that if you see a heartbeat at 6 weeks of pregnancy, the chances of the pregnancy continuing are 78%.

A heartbeat at 8 weeks increases the chance of a continuing pregnancy to 98% and at 10 weeks that goes up to 99.4%.

So things could still go wrong and sadly sometimes do, but as long as there is a heartbeat, the risk of miscarriage decreases as the weeks go by.

We hope you will find this information helpful and reassuring.

If you have further questions, do not hesitate to ask a member of our team.

Contact numbers

Royal Sussex County Hospital

(Main) 01273 696955
(EPAC) Ext. 4402, Monday-Friday 8-4
(Level 11) Ext. 4013

Princess Royal Hospital

(Main) 01444 441881
(EPAC) Ext. 8370 / Ext. 5686
(Horsted Keynes) Ext. 5685

The Miscarriage Association

17 Wentworth Terrace, Wakefield, WF13QW
tel: 01924 200799 e-mail: info@miscarriageassociation.org.uk
www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

If you have bleeding and/or pain you can get medical help/advice from:

- Your GP or midwife who may advise you to go to hospital
- Your nearest EPU which can be found at www.earlypregnancy.org.uk/FindUS1.asp add the contact numbers for RSCH AND PRH
- NHS CHOICES 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. The service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.
- BSUH NHS TRUST(2011) GP001 Early Pregnancy Unit Clinical Guidelines.
- Patient UK Information leaflets www.patient.co.uk Women's Health Category
- Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists www.rcog.co.uk
- National institute for Health and Clinical Excellence: Clinical Guidelines: Nice Pathways www.nice.org.uk



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