

# Pregnancy of unknown location

Department of Gynaecology

## Summary

What is a pregnancy of unknown location (PUL)?

What are the causes of a PUL?

How will I be monitored?

What should I do if I have pain or bleeding?

### What is a pregnancy of unknown location (PUL)?

You have had an ultrasound, based on your positive pregnancy test and any symptoms that brought you to the clinic. This was to check that your pregnancy was developing normally.

Following this scan we have not been able to localise your pregnancy and the subsequent hormone tests we took, show a low level of hormone.

### What are the causes of a PUL?

There are three possible reasons for a PUL. We will discuss each of these with you and support you through the process.

**Very early pregnancy:** The pregnancy may be normal but too small to be seen because we are scanning you too early into your pregnancy. This is not unusual especially in patients that are unsure of their dates or those with irregular or long cycles.

**Miscarriage:** The pregnancy loss may have occurred prior to the ultrasound scan. This will usually be associated with vaginal bleeding which may not be heavy if the pregnancy loss occurred very early. The pregnancy hormones will however remain in your body for a while after a miscarriage and gradually disappear. Your urinary pregnancy test can remain positive for up to 10 days after a pregnancy loss, and you can continue to 'feel' pregnant.

**Ectopic pregnancy:** This is when the pregnancy forms outside the womb, usually in the fallopian tube. This is a potentially dangerous situation and may be difficult to diagnose on ultrasound scan in the early stages. It is very important for this reason that you are carefully monitored to allow the early diagnosis of an ectopic pregnancy before internal bleeding occurs or to rule it out.

## How will I be monitored?

We will request that you give us a blood sample to measure your pregnancy hormone levels. Depending on the result and your symptoms we will suggest repeating the blood tests between two and seven days time. We will then compare both results and explain the potential implications of these results.

If the initial blood sample is high we may counsel you and consent you for a diagnostic laparoscopy (looking into the tummy with a telescope). This is more likely to be the case if you are experiencing abdominal pains or at increased risk of a ectopic pregnancy as established from your past medical history.

If at subsequent scans we see that the pregnancy is within the womb and looks to be developing normally then we need do nothing further and you should not experience any further problems. Sadly we may also see that your pregnancy hormone levels start to fall and this will show that the pregnancy is failing. In the majority of women (over 97%) the pregnancy will then be reabsorbed naturally and there will be no need for any more treatment. You may have some further bleeding during this time.

## What should I do if I have pain or bleeding?

We advise that you contact us through the telephone numbers given below.

Until the diagnosis of the location of the pregnancy is confirmed, we advise that you avoid any strenuous activity and long distance travel.

**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.

## Contact numbers

### Royal Sussex County Hospital

(Main) 01273 696955  
(EPAC) Ext. 4402, Monday-Friday 8-4  
(Day unit) Ext. 7242  
(Level 11) Ext. 4013

### Princess Royal Hospital

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

### The Miscarriage association

C/O Clayton Hospital, Northgate, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF1 3JS  
01924 200799 [www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk](http://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk)

### The Ectopic Pregnancy Trust,

Maternity Unit, The Hillingdon Hospital,  
Pield Heath Road, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 3NN.  
Phone: 01895 238 025 [www.ectopic.org.uk](http://www.ectopic.org.uk)

- BSUH NHS TRUST(2011) GP001 Early Pregnancy Unit Clinical Guidelines.
- Patient UK Information leaflets [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)  
Women's Health Category
- Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists [www.rcog.co.uk](http://www.rcog.co.uk)
- National institute for Health and Clinical Excellence: Clinical Guidelines:  
Nice Pathways [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)



© Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust

#### Disclaimer

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

Ref number: 429.4  
Publication Date: July 2017  
Review Date: July 2019