



We can provide interpreters for a variety of languages, information in larger print or other formats (e.g. audio) - please call us on 01932 723553.

To use the Text Relay service, prefix all numbers with 18001.

اگر نیاز به ترجمہ دارید، لطفاً با شماره 01932 723553 تماس بگیرید۔

ने उदाहृत उदाहरणों में लैंग्वेज री उां विवधा वरवे हिस नंघर उे डेन वरवे: 01932 723553

اگر آپ اس کا اردو زبان میں ترجمہ چاہتے ہیں، تو براہ کرم اس فون نمبر 01932 723553 پر رابطہ کریں

Se precisa de uma tradução por favor contacte: 01932 723553

আপনার অনুবাদের দরকার হলে এখানে যোগাযোগ করুন : 01932 723553

यदि आपको अनुवाद की जरूरत है तो कृपया इस नंबर पर फोन करें: 01932 723553

Jeżeli chcemy, aby te informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić 01932 723553

**Ashford Hospital**  
London Road  
Ashford, Middlesex  
TW15 3AA  
Tel: **01784 884488**

**St. Peter's Hospital**  
Guildford Road  
Chertsey, Surrey  
KT16 0PZ.  
Tel: **01932 872000**

Website: [www.ashfordstpeters.nhs.uk](http://www.ashfordstpeters.nhs.uk)

# Bleeding and abdominal pain in early pregnancy

## Early Pregnancy Unit



The patient information leaflet for women who present with bleeding and pain in early pregnancy up to 12 weeks gestation.

### Early Pregnancy Unit opening hours:

Open: Monday to Friday 0900-1700  
USS scanning hours: Monday to Friday 0900-1300  
Phone: 01932 722662

If the line is engaged, please leave a message and we will call you back

### Early Pregnancy Unit website:

<http://www.ashfordstpeters.nhs.uk/your-pregnancy/early-pregnancy-unit>

### Early Pregnancy Unit email:

[asp-tr.earlypregnancy@nhs.net](mailto:asp-tr.earlypregnancy@nhs.net)

## What does vaginal bleeding and /or pain mean for me in pregnancy?

Vaginal bleeding and or pain in early pregnancy are common and don't always mean there is a problem. However, it may be a warning sign of a miscarriage or other early pregnancy problems.

### What is the cause?

For most women, bleeding and pain in pregnancy may resolve and the pregnancy continues without any problems. Possible causes include miscarriage, an ectopic or molar pregnancy. There are other non-pregnancy related causes of pain like muscular pain,

## You can get further information and advice from:

Association of Early Pregnancy Units (AEPU)

<http://www.aepu.org.uk/>

Miscarriage Association:

<https://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/>

National Institute for Health & Care Excellence (NICE) Ectopic Pregnancy and Miscarriage

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng126>

NHS 111 Service:

<http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/AboutNHSservices/Emergencyandurgentcareservices/Pages/NHS-111.aspx>

Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/patient-leaflets/bleeding-and-pain-in-early-pregnancy/>

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/gtg21/>

---

### Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty.

If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Experience Team on 01932 723553 or email [asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net](mailto:asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net). If you remain concerned, the team can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

---

**Author:** Dr Diana Yakubovich, Miss Izuwah-Njoku

**Department:** Obstetrics and Gynaecology

**Version:** 3

**Published:** January 2021

**Review:** January 2023

pregnancy can pose a risk to your health and the treatment options will be discussed by your doctor.

- **Pregnancy of unknown location (PoUL):** This is where you have a positive pregnancy test and your pregnancy has not been seen on ultrasound scan

#### **Reasons for PoUL include:**

- The pregnancy is in the womb but it is too small or too early to be seen. Modern pregnancy testing kits are extremely sensitive and can detect the pregnancy hormone just a few days after conception. However, a pregnancy may not always be seen on ultrasound until approximately 3 weeks after conception (about 5 weeks from your last period).
- An early miscarriage has occurred, particularly if you have had heavy bleeding that has now settled. Pregnancy tests can stay positive for a week or two after a miscarriage.
- An ectopic pregnancy that is too small to be seen. As many as one in five women with a PoUL may have an ectopic pregnancy.

**When you are given a diagnosis of (PoUL), you must listen carefully to the instructions the doctor or nurse will give you and ensure you keep your follow up appointment until we are certain about the location and outcome of the pregnancy.**

**Remember you can return to our emergency department if the bleeding or pain gets more severe or you feel unwell.**

urinary tract infection or surgical problems. These non-pregnancy related conditions are not discussed in this leaflet.

### **What will you do to find out what is happening to my pregnancy?**

If you have presented to our Emergency department, you will be asked about your symptoms, pregnancy history and general health. You may need to have a urine sample taken to confirm the pregnancy. A blood test may be done to check your blood count, blood group and occasionally, the pregnancy hormone level. In addition to a general assessment, you may also require an internal vaginal examination to check for pain and/or severity of bleeding. This may involve using a speculum (a plastic instrument) and/or digital examination. This examination will not affect the outcome of your pregnancy. We will also refer you to be seen in our Early Pregnancy Unit (EPU) for a scan if this is required.

**We aim to do a scan as soon as possible in our EPU but this may take up to 48 hours to arrange.** You will be advised to arrange an EPU consultation by calling on **Monday to Friday on 01932 722662. Please note our opening hours on the previous page.**

### **What happens in EPU?**

Our EPU is located on the **ground floor of the Abbey Wing at St Peter's Hospital and this is where** you will have your scan. Some scans are also done in the scan department. In early pregnancy, the scan will be done internally, with a probe inserted into the vagina. This is slightly uncomfortable, but not painful and will not

harm the baby or cause a miscarriage. The scan will check that the pregnancy is inside the womb and ascertain if the pregnancy is progressing normally.

## What should I do while waiting for the scan?

If your symptoms are mild and it was not possible to get a scan on the same day, you may be discharged home to await your scan. You can carry on with your normal activities if you feel able to. Use a pad to monitor the amount of bleeding you are having. It is advisable to get plenty of rest. Do not have sex or use tampons, as this can increase the risk of infection.

## You should return to the Emergency Department if:

- The bleeding becomes too heavy and you are worried (much heavier than a normal period or changing pads every hour and this is ongoing)
- You are experiencing severe pain in your lower abdomen
- You are having pain in your shoulders
- You feel faint or dizzy or collapse
- You get shivers or flu-like symptoms, or a smelly vaginal discharge

Out of hours and if your symptoms are not severe, you can call Pregnancy Advice Line – 0300 1235473. The triage line is run by midwives who are available for advice and support 24 hours day, 7 days a week.

## What if I miscarry while waiting for my scan?

Early miscarriage sadly is very common, affecting as many as 1 in 5 pregnancies. Most miscarriages occur as a one-off event. Unfortunately, there is no treatment you can get to prevent an early miscarriage. Miscarriages are not caused by stress, physical activity or having sex. In most cases, it is not possible to give a reason for an early miscarriage, but the most common cause is thought to be a problem with the baby's chromosomes (the genetic information that we inherit from our parents).

## What is the possible outcome of my scan in EPU?

- **Viable intra-uterine pregnancy:** The pregnancy is located within the womb and a heartbeat can be clearly seen.
- **Early intra-uterine pregnancy of uncertain viability:** The pregnancy is seen within the womb but it is too early to identify a heartbeat. It may not always be possible to see a heartbeat before the 6th week of pregnancy. If it is very early in your pregnancy, you may need to come back for another scan in 7-14 days.
- **Early miscarriage:** The scan may show that that you have unfortunately had a miscarriage. Sadly miscarriages are common but most women do go on to have a healthy pregnancy or pregnancies in the future. Your doctor will explain the various treatments available.
- **Ectopic pregnancy:** This is where the pregnancy is growing outside the cavity of the womb. An ectopic