

Vaginal Bleeding or Mild Lower Abdominal (tummy) Pain in Early Pregnancy

Important information for patients

(For use in the Urgent Care Centre, GP Out-of-Hours service or the Emergency Department at Leighton Hospital)

Contact numbers

Should you require any additional information or help,
please contact:

Female Surgical Ward: 01270 612048 / 612451 (24 hours)

This leaflet is available in audio, Braille, large print and other languages.
To request a copy, please ask a member of staff.



In early pregnancy, vaginal bleeding and some generalised lower abdominal pain (like period pains) are very common, but we understand that it can be very frightening. We hope this leaflet will provide you and your partner with some information and reassurance.

Bleeding in pregnancy is often referred to as a "Threatened Miscarriage" but it does not always mean that you will go on to miscarry; most bleeding settles after a few days. You may be offered an ultrasound scan for reassurance, depending on how many weeks pregnant you are and the amount of bleeding you have experienced.

It is quite normal for women who attend the Urgent Care Centre, GP Out-of-Hours service or the Emergency Department (A&E) at Leighton Hospital to be sent home and contacted, usually within 24 hours, to arrange an appointment in the Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit (EPAU).

Whilst waiting for the appointment to be arranged you may want to go home and rest. We do not routinely advise bed rest in early pregnancy and there is no specific treatment for bleeding.

Bleeding will often appear worse when you get up after you have been resting or when you go to the toilet. This is just as a result of blood settling in the vagina and then coming out as a result of gravity.

We advise that if you feel the need to use a sanitary towel you should use pads rather than tampons. You should avoid sexual intercourse. If you need to take anything for pain then we recommend paracetamol.

If the bleeding or pain increases while you are waiting for an appointment you can seek further advice from your GP or the GP Out-of-Hours service. If you feel very unwell you can return to the Urgent Care Centre or the Emergency Department. You may not get scanned any sooner but if the Doctor feels you need to be admitted to hospital they will arrange that.

At the EPAU you will be asked to attend with a "comfortably full" bladder. We will ask you about your symptoms and you will usually be scanned.

Ultrasound scan

Initially we will scan you abdominally, that is placing the ultrasound probe on your tummy, but often in early pregnancy it is necessary to perform a vaginal ultrasound scan to get more information about how the pregnancy is progressing.

These scans are very well tolerated by women and although a little undignified do not usually cause any pain. The vaginal scan is done with an empty bladder.

Sometimes after scanning it is not clear whether all is well with the pregnancy and you may be sent for blood tests. These tests often need to be repeated after 48 hours so we can see how the pregnancy hormone levels are changing. The EPAU or the Gynaecology Ward will contact you with the results and a further plan of care.

Following the ultrasound scan

If the pregnancy is progressing well and no cause for the bleeding is found a follow up appointment is not usually required.

The EPAU telephone number is 01270 273723 (voicemail). Available Monday to Friday, 8.00am – 4.00pm. Messages are taken from this service during weekday afternoons and you will be contacted by the nursing staff with an appointment

For advice you can also contact the Gynaecology Ward on 01270 612048 / 612451 (24 hours).

Please ensure you leave a current contact telephone number for EPAU to contact you on. Telephone calls from the hospital will come up as private number or 'number withheld'.

Useful organisations

The Miscarriage Association

Tel helpline: 01924 200 799 Monday-Friday 9.00am-4.00pm

www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

The Ectopic Pregnancy Trust

Tel helpline: 020 773 2653 Monday-Friday 10.00am-4.00pm

www.ectopic.org.uk