

Information about Intrauterine Pregnancy but Uncertain Viability

Bleeding or spotting in pregnancy is common, especially during the first 12 weeks and doesn't necessarily mean that you are miscarrying or that you will miscarry. If you have bleeding or spotting, you will hopefully still go on to have a healthy pregnancy.

Emergency early scans

You may be referred for an early scan because of vaginal bleeding or pain, or possibly because you have had problems in a previous pregnancy. **The best time to scan is from about 7 weeks' gestation when it should be possible to see the baby's heartbeat.**

What does a scan show?

The ultrasound scan may show:

- **A viable ongoing pregnancy.** There is a heartbeat and the pregnancy is the "right size for dates" – that is, the size that would be expected based on the first day of your last period.
- **An 'intrauterine pregnancy of uncertain viability'.** This is a pregnancy in the right place in your uterus (so not ectopic), but we are not able to know if it is growing normally at this time. Perhaps the pregnancy is much smaller than it should be according to dates or the heartbeat is particularly slow or faint. The pregnancy may be too small for the heartbeat to be visible, or we may only have seen an empty sac today.

Why would there be no heartbeat on my baby today?

If we did not find your baby's heartbeat today it could be that you conceived late in your cycle so everything is fine, but you are less pregnant than you thought. If this is the case, we will hopefully pick up the heartbeat at your next scan. Unfortunately there is also a chance that we may not have picked up a heartbeat because your pregnancy is not developing normally.

Why can't you tell me now what's happening?

We can't be sure sometimes on one scan what is happening. The only way to be sure is to give your body more time for things to grow and then look again in a week or so when things should be clearer. At that time, the person doing the scan will be looking for a clear difference in the size of the pregnancy sac and for a developing baby and a heartbeat. Sometimes, it can take several scans before you know for sure what is going on, and some women describe it like being 'in limbo'.

What do I do at home?

Going home without knowing whether your pregnancy is continuing can be very difficult. You are likely to feel very anxious and distressed and will need good support from a friend, partner or family. If you haven't told anyone about your pregnancy this may be a good time to confide in someone close who can support you and come back to hospital with you if that is what you would like. Some women continue to work because they like the distraction, others need a few days at home. This will probably depend on how much bleeding or pain you have. There are no special things you need to do at home. Continue to keep active. Women have a higher risk of blood clots in their legs or lungs in pregnancy. If you have had a blood clot before, blood clotting

disorders in your family, you smoke or have a high body mass index, you may be at higher risk and need to start injections into your abdomen (tummy).

Do I need to come to hospital if I have more bleeding or pain?

You will usually be more comfortable at home until your next scan. You can take paracetamol for pain, but no more than 8 tablets in a 24 hour period. Change your pads like you would with a period, but call us if it is very heavy or you feel unwell with the bleeding. We would suggest that if you need 2 thick sanitary pads per hour for 2 hours then you should have an assessment in hospital. Unfortunately we cannot stop bleeding or a miscarriage from happening but it is important to keep you safe and as comfortable as possible until your next appointment. Please phone us if you are unsure about any pain or bleeding.

If I bleed heavily do I need to come for my next scan date?

Some women may bleed more between scans but we still suggest that you come for your appointment. Some women bleed and still have an ongoing pregnancy. Some women bleed and unfortunately miscarry. It is important that we find out what is happening for you and review your symptoms to make sure you are well.

How will I know if I have miscarried?

Some women describe only light bleeding but some describe heavy bleeding for a couple of hours with some clots. Some women describe period pain whilst others describe labour type contractions.

Some women describe seeing a sac or tissue in the bleeding that they pass. If this happens to you and you are unsure what to do, please talk to us. We are happy for you to bring the tissue to us, and we can care for it under our hospital guidelines.

Could I have a scan earlier to give me a quicker answer?

We need to give the pregnancy time to develop and repeating a scan too early is not useful – it won't tell us if the pregnancy is growing normally.

Contact Details:

<p>The Early Pregnancy Unit (EPU), Treatment Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, Huntingdon, PE29 6NT</p> <p>Opening days may vary</p>	<p>The Emergency Gynaecology Assessment Unit (EGAU), Women's Health Outpatients, Bretton Gate, Peterborough (City Hospital), PE3 9GZ</p> <p>Open: Weekdays 0800-1800 Weekend and bank holidays 0800-1200</p>
<p>Central triage line for EPU and EGAU: 01733 673758 (voicemail will cut in when the line is engaged – <u>please leave a message for a call back.</u>)</p> <p>www.womenshealthpeterborough.co.uk</p>	
<p>For emergencies only, out of these hours, please attend the Emergency Department</p>	