

Emergency Gynaecology Assessment Unit Ultrasound Scan in pregnancy

You have been referred for an emergency scan today because of pain, vaginal bleeding or spotting, or possibly because you have had problems in a previous pregnancy.

Will the scan be able to tell me that everything is okay with my baby today?

The best time to have a scan is from about 7 weeks' gestation when it should be possible to see the baby's heartbeat. If you are less than that by your last menstrual period, it may be too soon today to know if your pregnancy is developing normally, and you may be asked to return for another scan in another week or so. That allows the person doing the scan to see if there is a clear difference in the size of the pregnancy sac between the two scans.

Sometimes, it can take several scans before you know for sure what is happening. It can be very stressful dealing with this uncertainty – some women describe it as being “in limbo”. You may need to find some support for yourself.

How will you do the ultrasound scan?

When you are having problems in pregnancy, or in the very early stages, the best way to see what is happening is to do an ‘internal’ scan. The probe is shaped like a tampon that goes inside the vagina. It is then rotated gently inside, to get clearer views of your womb and pregnancy.

Will it harm the pregnancy?

There is no evidence that having a vaginal scan will cause a miscarriage or harm your baby. If you bleed after a vaginal scan, it will most likely be because there was already blood pooled higher in the vagina and the probe dislodged it.

We do not know the effect of repeated scans on growing pregnancies, so we recommend that if we see your pregnancy in the right place, your next scan is around 11-13 weeks gestation, then around 20 weeks gestation. Unless there is a clinical change, we would not suggest another ultrasound.

Does it hurt?

You can feel the probe move inside you but we would not expect this scan to hurt. If you are finding it painful, then tell us and we will stop. If you find a sensitive spot inside when we are doing the scan, tell us and we can look at that area in a bit more detail.

Will it be a woman or man who does the scan?

As an emergency service, we don't always know in advance whether it will be a male or female who is going to carry out your scan. If you have strong reasons for NOT wanting a male, or a vaginal scan, please tell the staff when you go through to the scan room. It may be that we need to book you to come back at another time, or to carry out different investigations instead of the ultrasound.

In my last pregnancy I had a scan on my tummy, why won't you do that this time?

Routine scans are done on your tummy, but because you have come to us with a problem (or had previous problems), we need the best view we can get for the scan today, and the internal scan gives us the best views. An internal scan is the one recommended by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence.

Can I bring someone in to the scan room with me?

We would expect it to be absolutely fine for you to bring someone into the scan room with you, but we only have room for one escort. If there are concerns around contagious infections, then we may have to discuss limiting the scan to just you.

What about bringing in children?

We hope we are going to give you good news about your pregnancy today, but because you are coming to us with pain or bleeding, it is difficult for us to know at this stage that everything is developing normally in your pregnancy. Taking children into the scan room can put more pressure on you, especially if you want to ask questions or the staff need to explain things to you. We recommend that you ask a friend or family member to look after your children during the scan.

How long will the scan take?

The scan itself will take about 5 -10 minutes and then you will speak to a nurse or doctor who will explain the results, and what that means.

I have been eating and drinking before coming here today, is that a problem?

The internal scan is better when it is done with an empty bladder, so we would like you to go to the toilet now. Use a specimen bottle to catch a urine specimen, and then we will be ready to do your scan. Give the sample to the nurse in the scan room

Contact Details:

<p>The Early Pregnancy Unit (EPU) Treatment Centre, Hinchingbrooke 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 Weekends/Bank Holidays 0800-1200</p>
<p>Central triage line for EPU and EGAU: 01733 673758 (voicemail will cut in when the line is engaged – please leave a message for a call back).</p> <p>www.womenshealthpeterborough.co.uk</p>	
<p>For emergencies only, out of these hours, please attend the Emergency Department.</p>	