

NHS Forth Valley
Women and Children Services

Bleeding in Early Pregnancy

Patient Information

A large, decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of several overlapping, wavy, light blue shapes that resemble stylized waves or a ribbon, extending across the width of the page.

Bleeding in early pregnancy

Bleeding in early pregnancy causes women a great deal of worry. The aim of this leaflet is to give you some advice and information about what to do if you bleed early in your pregnancy. We will aim to answer some common questions, which we hope you will find useful.

Bleeding in pregnancy is fairly common and unfortunately it is sometimes an indication that you may have had or are having a miscarriage. However the pregnancy may also continue unharmed.

Why am I bleeding?

- Normal pregnancy – bleeding may occur when the pregnancy implants in the womb.
- You may be threatening to miscarry.
- You may have an ectopic pregnancy
- Bleeding may be coming from the neck of the womb (Cervix)
- We may never find the cause.

In many cases the bleeding will stop spontaneously and the pregnancy will continue as normal.

What should I do if I notice any bleeding?

Under 14 Weeks

You should phone the Early Pregnancy Assessment service (EPAS). The contact details are at the back of this leaflet.

EPAS is available to all pregnant women between 6 & 14 weeks of pregnancy who have bleeding or abdominal (tummy) pain.

Under 6 Weeks

YOU SHOULD PHONE THE EARLY PREGNANCY ASSESSMENT SERVICE (EPAS). Appointments are not routinely arranged if you are under 6 weeks pregnant but you will be given some telephone advice. This is because light bleeding is fairly common at this stage in pregnancy and it is usually too early to see anything on scan.

Over 14 weeks

You should phone Maternity Triage. Again, contact details are at the back of this leaflet.

Early Pregnancy Assessment Service (EPAS)

When will I be seen?

You will be seen at the next available appointment. This will usually be within 72 hours.

What if the bleeding is very heavy or abdominal pain severe at time of referral?

You will be referred directly to Gynaecology inpatient ward (Ward 6).

Can I bring somebody with me?

Yes - but only one person will be permitted into the scan room with you. Sometimes you may have to wait to be seen so please be mindful of this if you are bringing small children as they tend to get fed up easily.

Who will see me when I attend?

You will be seen by a nurse who will provide all the care you require but she will have access to medical staff if she thinks this is necessary.

What will happen when I attend?

Consultation and Examination

You will be asked about your symptoms, the date of your last period and your medical history.

A vaginal examination (similar to a cervical screening test) may be carried out to see where the bleeding is coming from. A vaginal examination will not cause you to miscarry.

Tests

The following tests may be suggested

- A urine sample to confirm a positive pregnancy test.
- A test for chlamydia may be offered.
- Blood test(s) to check your blood group and/or pregnancy hormone levels.

Ultrasound scan

Most women are offered a transvaginal scan (where a probe is gently inserted in your vagina) or a transabdominal scan (where the probe is placed over your abdomen). You may be offered both. Both scans are safe and will not make you miscarry. A repeat scan may be necessary after 14 days if the pregnancy is very small or has not been seen.

Medical terms that may be used to describe what is happening

- A threatened miscarriage - bleeding or cramping in a continuing pregnancy.
- An incomplete miscarriage - a miscarriage has started but there is still some pregnancy tissue left inside the womb.
- A complete miscarriage - when all the pregnancy tissue has been passed and the womb is empty.
- A delayed miscarriage/missed miscarriage/silent miscarriage - the pregnancy has stopped developing but is still inside the womb. This will be diagnosed on the scan.

What happens if I am having a miscarriage?

The nurse will explain all the findings to you. She will explain the options available to you and give you leaflets on these if required. She will arrange any follow up appointments for you before you leave.

Is it always possible to give an answer at the first visit?

No, not always. It will depend on the findings and how many weeks pregnant you are.

You may be asked to come back for a repeat scan in 1 to 2 weeks or you may be advised to have a blood test. If a blood test is recommended the results are usually available within 24 hours and the nurse will explain the results by phone and discuss any further investigations which are required.

What if my scan is fine?

You should make an appointment to see the midwife at your GP practice if you have not done so already. If you have already seen the midwife please keep any appointments you have.

What happens if I bleed again?

There may have been some bleeding seen inside the womb at your first scan and this may take some time to pass. If your bleeding becomes heavier than a normal period or is fresh and red you should contact staff on the numbers overleaf for advice.

Does the bleeding affect the baby?

No. If your scan is OK there is no increased risk to the baby.

Have I done anything to cause the bleeding?

No. Bleeding is not caused by anything you have done - even if you have had a miscarriage. Most miscarriages occur because there is something wrong which cannot be prevented.

Can I have sex?

We advise you not to have sex whilst you are bleeding but it will not cause any harm after the bleeding has stopped.

Should I stay off work?

This depends on the severity of the bleeding, how you feel emotionally or whether you are having any treatment. If you are off for between 3-7 days you require a self-certificate, which you can get from your employer. If you are off for longer than this please contact your GP for a sick line if necessary.

Contact details/further information

Early Pregnancy Assessment Service

Forth Valley Royal Hospital
Telephone: 01324 567119

Ward 6, Forth Valley Royal Hospital
01324 566390

Support Agencies

The Miscarriage Association

For support and information:

Telephone: 01924 200799 (Monday-Friday, 9am to 4pm)

Email: info@miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Website: www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Ectopic Pregnancy Trust

Maternity Unit, The Hillingdon Hospital, Pield Heath Road, Uxbridge,
Middlesex UB8 3NN

Tel: 01895 238 025

Email: ept@ectopic.org

Website: www.ectopic.org.uk

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If you can't go let us know!

Every month around 2,000 people across Forth Valley fail to turn up for hospital appointments. This costs the NHS millions of pounds each year and increases waiting times. So if you are unable to attend or no longer require your hospital appointment please let us know so we can offer it to someone else.

Smoking is not permitted anywhere on our hospital grounds and it is now an offence to smoke within 15 metres of a hospital building. This can result in a fixed penalty notice of £50 or a fine of up to £1,000.

