Vaginal Bleeding in Early Pregnancy

Understandably this is a very worrying time for you and your partner and you may be feeling both frightened and concerned. Bleeding in early pregnancy is more common than you might imagine and does not always mean there is a problem. One in Ten women may experience some bleeding. Bleeding in pregnancy is often called a “threatened miscarriage”. It does not necessarily mean you will go on to miscarry.

Why does bleeding happen?
- **Cervical ectropian** – harmless changes in the neck in the womb (cervix) can cause bleeding particularly after sexual intercourse. This is not harmful to the baby.
- **Infection** - can also cause abnormal bleeding
- **Miscarriage** occurs in 1 in 4 pregnancies before 12 weeks gestation.
- Often a cause for the bleeding is not found

What tests will be done?
**In A/E department**
- You will be asked about your symptoms, date of last period and your medical history.
- A vaginal examination may be done to look at the cervix to see where the bleeding is coming from. This is not necessary for all women but only for those where the bleeding is found to be very heavy.
- A urine test to confirm pregnancy
- Blood tests are sometimes done

Will I get a Scan?
Ultrasound scan is carried out in Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit (EPAU). This is a specialist clinic for people who have pain or bleeding problems in early pregnancy. You will be given an appointment to come to EPAU which is situated in the Women’s Health Clinic. This appointment may not be the same day as you are seen in A/E. It can be difficult to see a baby in the womb if the pregnancy is less than 6 weeks. You may be offered a vaginal or abdominal scan or both. This depends on how many weeks pregnant you are. Both types of scan are safe and do not cause miscarriage. A repeat scan 7-14 days later may be necessary if the pregnancy is early and baby is clearly not seen

What should I do if I have more bleeding before the scan appointment?
It is not uncommon to have further bleeding. If this remains lighter than a normal period you should keep your appointment for scan. You can rest at home or continue with your normal routine. Whatever you do will not make a difference to the outcome of the pregnancy so do what feels right for you.
If bleeding becomes heavier than your normal period with cramping pain you can contact EPAU by phone (during office hours – see below) or at other times return to the A/E department.
Unfortunately if the pregnancy is miscarrying it is not possible to do anything to change this. We have found that of all the women referred to EPAU, with bleeding in early pregnancy half of them with continue to be pregnant.
Contact
Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit
Women’s Health Unit
Monday – Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm
EPAU Tel: 0191 445 2146

24hour contact telephone
Ward 14A Tel: 0191 4452013

Further information:-
NHS direct – Tel: 0845 4647
NHS Direct on line www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Association of Early Pregnancy Assessment Units www.earlypregnancy.org.uk

Miscarriage Association Tel: 01924 200799
Website: www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Ectopic Pregnancy Trust Tel: 01895 238 025
Website: www.ectopic.org.uk

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
Website www.rcog.org.uk

Data Protection
Any personal information is kept confidential. There may be occasions where your information needs to be shared with other care professionals to ensure you receive the best care possible.

In order to assist us improve the services available your information may be used for clinical audit, research, teaching and anonymised for National NHS Reviews. Further information is available in the leaflet Disclosure of Confidential Information IL137, via Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust website or the PALS Service.

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