

**Patient
Information**

Vaginal bleeding and pain in early pregnancy

Introduction

Vaginal bleeding in early pregnancy (less than 16 weeks) is common. It is not always a sign of a problem and may settle on its own. We understand this is an anxious time and hope that the information in this leaflet will help to reassure you.

Referral to the Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit (EPAU)

Most women who experience bleeding or pain do not need to stay in hospital but it is important that they see a specialist to rule out some of the more worrying causes. For this reason, you may be referred to the EPAU.

An appointment with the EPAU team will enable us to rule out miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy (where the pregnancy grows outside of the womb, usually in the fallopian tubes). You will be contacted by the EPAU team, usually within 24 hours, to arrange an appointment.

What happens at EPAU?

You will be seen by a member of the team (this may be a doctor or nurse) who will assess you and arrange for any necessary tests. This may be blood samples for testing and an ultrasound scan. Once the results of these tests are received you will be seen again by the doctor or nurse to discuss.

The staff at EPAU will help and advice you accordingly re your test results and guide you through what will happen next. It may not always be possible to find a cause for your symptoms at your first appointment so follow up appointments may be arranged.

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When you attend EPAU

It is helpful if you can:

- bring an early morning urine sample.
- drink a pint or so of water before you come to the clinic so your bladder is relatively full (this helps with the ultrasound scan).
- bring your pregnancy notes if you have them.

Contact information

If you feel unwell, experience further heavy vaginal bleeding or severe abdominal pain, please seek advice from the Helpline below or call NHS 111.

EPAU Helpline

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 5549

Available 24 hours

NHS 111

Tel: 111

Further information

NHS Choices

Website: www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/related-conditions/common-symptoms/vaginal-bleeding/

Association of Early Pregnancy Units (AEPU)

Website: www.earlypregnancy.org.uk

Miscarriage Association

Website: www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Ectopic Pregnancy Trust

Website: <https://ectopic.org.uk>

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Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>