



Bleeding in early pregnancy

You came to the emergency department with bleeding in the first months of pregnancy. The doctor examined you and did the tests needed today. It is not always possible to know yet what is causing the bleeding. This sheet explains what may happen and what to watch for.

What is it?

Bleeding in early pregnancy is common. Many women who bleed go on to have a healthy pregnancy. Sometimes bleeding is a sign of a miscarriage, which is usually not caused by anything you did. Rarely, the pregnancy is growing outside the womb (an ectopic pregnancy), which can be dangerous. More tests or a scan in the coming days may be needed.

Looking after yourself at home

- Rest if you feel like it. Normal gentle activity will not cause a miscarriage.
- Use pads, not tampons or menstrual cups, so you can see how much you bleed.
- Avoid sex until the bleeding has stopped.
- Keep a note of how many pads you use and any clots or tissue you pass.
- Have someone with you or nearby if you can, especially if the bleeding is heavy.
- Feeling sad, worried or numb is normal. Talk to someone you trust.

Medicines

- Paracetamol can help the pain, unless your doctor told you not to. Follow the packet or your doctor's instructions.
- Do not take ibuprofen or similar anti-inflammatory painkillers while you are pregnant.
- If your blood group is rhesus negative, you may need an injection. Ask your doctor if you are unsure.

Follow-up

- Go to any scan, blood test or clinic appointment you were given.
- See your family doctor or health centre if the bleeding continues for more than a week.
- Do a pregnancy test 3 weeks after the bleeding stops if you were told to.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- Heavy bleeding that soaks a pad every hour for 2 hours, or large clots
- Severe pain in your belly, especially on one side
- Pain in the tip of your shoulder
- You faint, or feel very dizzy, weak or short of breath
- Fever, shivering, or a bad-smelling discharge from the vagina



Scan to read this sheet on your phone

This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.

EM Orbit · Emergency medicine, in one orbit · early-pregnancy-bleeding-en