

## THREATENED MISCARRIAGE

An ongoing pregnancy associated with vaginal bleeding is called a threatened miscarriage. The first symptoms are usually vaginal bleeding with or without mild period type pain. The bleeding can occur at any time after a missed period. It is often noticed when going to the toilet as a smear of pink, brown or red loss on the toilet paper. The amount of bleeding may vary from just spotting to a gush with clots.

The diagnosis of threatened miscarriage is made with the help of an ultrasound scan. At 6 weeks of pregnancy the ultrasound scan will be able to visualise your tiny baby and the scan will also show a heart beat, particularly if it is a vaginal scan. Sometimes the scan may show up a small haematoma (blood clot) around the pregnancy sac, which identifies the source of the bleeding, but more often nothing abnormal is seen.

It is not possible to give an explanation as to why this bleeding occurs. In most cases the pregnancy continues safely. The baby will come to no harm even if the bleeding is heavy. The likely causes of bleeding may be:

- 1) The implantation site:** As the placenta of your baby tries to burrow itself into the lining of the womb, it may cause some blood vessels of the womb to bleed.
- 2) The cervix:** During pregnancy, tissues become rich in blood supply and softer as a result of this any slight trauma to the cervix can provoke bleeding
- 3) The vagina.** Thrush or any other infection may cause bleeding from the inflamed vagina in the form of spotting.

A baby's heartbeat on ultrasound is reassuring. In the presence of a heart beat there is an 85-97% chance of your pregnancy continuing. If a collection of blood around the sac is seen on ultrasound scan you will be given an appointment for a rescans within 1-2 weeks. Alternatively this may be checked at your booking scan in the antenatal clinic which is usually around 11-13 weeks of pregnancy. When there is no recognisable cause of bleeding found a follow up is usually not required.

Although bed rest was routinely advised in the past for threatened miscarriage it did not affect the outcome. If you feel that going to bed may reassure you then do go to bed. There is no specific treatment to stop your bleeding. There may be at times increased bleeding noted when you get up to go to the toilet. It is simply due to pooling of blood in the vagina from lying down that comes out on standing as a result of gravity.

Having sexual intercourse during pregnancy does not have any adverse outcomes. However it would be sensible to avoid sex until the bleeding has completely stopped because of the risk of infection. We would advise you not to work as long as the bleeding continues so that you can rest. If you need a sick certificate your GP will be able to issue one.

Bright red blood suggests that it is fresh, whereas brown blood suggests that it is stale blood that is tracking down. If bleeding becomes bright red or heavier get in touch with the EPAU or the Emergency Room for advice.

- **Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit**

- Opening hours Monday until Friday 9am until 4pm
- Tel: 01-4085732

- **Emergency Room**

- Tel: 01-4085216

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