York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Pregnancy of uncertain viability

An explanation for patients

Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit (EPAU)

ⓘ For more information, please contact:

York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 726489

Or

Scarborough Hospital, Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, YO12 6QL or telephone 01723 385134

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On today's scan, we are unable to tell whether your pregnancy is progressing.

An explanation for patients

What does intrauterine pregnancy of uncertain viability on today's scan mean?

It means we are able to see a pregnancy sac in the womb (so not ectopic), but the sac is either too small to expect to see an embryo (the baby) or the embryo can be seen but is too small for us to expect to see a heartbeat.

Often the pregnancy is perfectly fine, it is just that on today's scan you are too early for us to see the heartbeat. This is especially likely if the scan has been done at less than six weeks since your last period or you are less pregnant than you thought. However, in some cases it may mean that the pregnancy has failed at an early stage and not developed any further. In other words, a miscarriage has occurred.

What will happen next?

To confirm what is happening we need to repeat your scan in 10 to 14 days (depending what we have seen on your first scan). We know this will be an anxious wait for you but performing a scan earlier may lead to another inconclusive result which would not be helpful.
If the pregnancy is not developing as it should it is possible that pain and bleeding may increase while waiting for the next scan.

What do I do at home?

Going home without knowing whether your pregnancy is continuing can be very difficult. If you have not told anyone about your pregnancy this may be a good time to confide in someone who can support you. Some people prefer to continue to work because they like the distraction, others need a few days at home. This may depend on how much bleeding and pain you have.

Do I need to come to hospital if I have more bleeding or pain?

If you develop increasing cramping, lower abdominal pain and heavier bleeding it may be a sign that you are miscarrying. Sadly, there is nothing we can do in hospital to stop this from happening and you may be more comfortable staying at home if you feel confident to do so.

Paracetamol can be taken to help with pain relief, one to two tablets every four to six hours, or up to eight tablets in 24 hours. However, if at any stage the bleeding or pain become unmanageable despite painkillers you need to attend your Emergency Department immediately.

We often explain that soaking more than two large sanitary pads an hour for two consecutive hours may be a sign that you are bleeding too heavily and need to be assessed.

How will I know if I am miscarrying?

Some people may experience only light bleeding, but some describe heavy bleeding for a couple of hours with clots. This may be much more than your usual period. Some women describe period pain whilst others describe labour type contractions.

You may or may not see the pregnancy sac or tissue if you are experiencing heavy loss and if you are unsure what to do please call us. We are happy for you to bring the tissue to us, and we can care for it under our hospital guidelines or discuss other options with you.

What happens next?

We would like to see you again, as arranged, so that we can rescan you. The time we need to wait between scans will depend on the stage of pregnancy your scan is showing today.

If you have further heavy bleeding, increased pain or you want advice on your symptoms you can contact us, via the telephone numbers below, and we can assess if an earlier appointment for you is necessary. Alternatively further information on signs and symptoms can be found on NHS (https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/miscarriage/) or from The Miscarriage Association website.

It is probably wise to avoid strenuous exercise at present. If you have any worries and would like further help or advice from this clinic, please telephone:

- York EPAU

Telephone 01904 726489
Monday to Sunday, 8am to 2.30pm

- York Gynaecology Assessment Unit (GAU)

Telephone 01904 726275
8.15am to 7.30pm (Use this number for out of hours enquiries)

- Scarborough EPAU

Telephone (24 hours) 01723 385134

Or you may prefer to contact your own GP or midwife.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:
V. Hughes, Women's Unit Deputy Manager,
York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or
Telephone 01904 726489.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website: www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

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