Emergency Department

Information for women with a problem in early pregnancy
Why have I been given this leaflet?

We have given you this leaflet as you have come to the Emergency Department with a problem in your early pregnancy, such as bleeding or abdominal cramps (similar to period pains).

Having cramping pains is very common in the first few weeks of pregnancy. Bleeding during pregnancy can be a sign of miscarriage but this is not always the cause. It is common to have some light vaginal bleeding at some point during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. This is called a threatened miscarriage and most women who have this will go on to have a healthy pregnancy. However, some women do subsequently go on to have a miscarriage.
What happens next?

We have assessed you while you have been in the Emergency Department and have arranged for you to go to either the **Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit (EPAU)** at the John Radcliffe Hospital or the **Early Pregnancy Assessment Clinic (EPAC)** at the Horton General Hospital. You will be assessed at this appointment by a doctor and will normally have an ultrasound scan to check on your pregnancy.

An ultrasound involves using a hand-held probe over the lower part of the skin on your tummy to produce images on a screen.

If your bladder is empty, or you are very early in your pregnancy, the doctor may not be able to see what they need using this type of ultrasound. They may ask if you are comfortable having an internal scan. This involves placing a probe, a little like a long tampon, inside your vagina. This will not hurt you or harm your pregnancy. It allows us to see things more clearly and give you more information on what is happening.

Sometimes a pregnancy is too small to see on either type of ultrasound. It may take us a few days or even a few weeks before we can detect a heartbeat, depending on how many weeks pregnant you are. This means that we may not be able to make a diagnosis immediately and you may need another ultrasound scan at a later date.
What should I expect while I am waiting for my scans?

Although it can be very worrying if you are bleeding or experiencing cramping pains, we hope that your scan will reassure you that your pregnancy is continuing. Normally any bleeding should become lighter, eventually stop and will not have harmed the baby in any way.

Women are often advised to rest in bed while they are bleeding, however, this seems to make little difference to the final outcome. If you wish, you may return to work, once you feel happy to do so. Sometimes it can be a good distraction to continue with normal everyday tasks.

Until the bleeding stops we recommend that you use sanitary towels rather than tampons as this reduces the risk of infection.

Although there is no evidence to suggest that having sexual intercourse while you are bleeding causes miscarriage, it is advisable to avoid this, just as a precaution. It is usually safe to return to sexual intercourse once the bleeding has stopped and at all other times during pregnancy.
When should I seek help?

If you develop any of the following symptoms, please go to your nearest Emergency Department or call for an ambulance:

- **severe abdominal pain** (this may be only on one side)
- **shoulder pain**
- **bleeding much more heavily than before**
- **fainting or collapse**.

These symptoms may be a sign that you have an ectopic pregnancy. This is when the pregnancy is not your uterus (womb) but in one of your fallopian tubes.

Advice and support

You may find that this experience has been worrying for you and has left you anxious about the future of your pregnancy. We hope that this information leaflet will have answered a few questions and given you some reassurance. However, if you would like to talk things over further your GP can provide advice and support during this time. They can also arrange additional ante-natal care for you. Please contact them if you have any worries. Alternatively, please feel free to contact the Urgent Gynaecology nurses in the Emergency Pregnancy Assessment Unit/Clinic for advice.
Your appointment is at the:

☐ Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit (EPAU) at the John Radcliffe Hospital

☐ Early Pregnancy Assessment Clinic (EPAC) at the Horton General Hospital

Date: ........................................................................................................................................

Time: .....................................................................................................................................

The Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit is in the Gynaecology Outpatient Department. This is on Level 1 of the Women’s Centre at the John Radcliffe Hospital, Headley Way, Oxford, OX3 9DU.

Telephone: **01865 221 142**
(Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 2.00pm)

The Early Pregnancy Assessment Clinic is in the Women’s Day Case Unit in the main block of the Horton General Hospital, near the restaurant. The hospital is on the Oxford Road in Banbury, OX16 9AL.

Telephone: **01295 229 090**
(Monday to Thursday, 1.15pm to 3.00pm,
Friday, 12.00pm to 2.00pm)
If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**