

Complications During Early Pregnancy

Vaginal bleeding and abdominal pain in early pregnancy can occur. It is not caused by anything you did and it is not caused by any food, exercise, activity or stress. About one quarter (1 in 4) of pregnant woman who go on to have healthy babies have some bleeding in early pregnancy. Most women who have vaginal bleeding or abdominal discomfort during their pregnancy do not go on to have a miscarriage. However, bleeding or abdominal discomfort can be a warning sign that problems may exist. Anytime bleeding or abdominal pain occurs during pregnancy it is important to see a doctor so that appropriate examinations and tests can be carried out. There is nothing that can be done to stop or prevent a miscarriage that has already begun.

As long as it has been determined that your pregnancy is in the uterus, there are two possible outcomes from this complication in early pregnancy.

+ The most likely is that the bleeding or pain will taper off. Bloodwork and ultrasounds will be done over the next few days and weeks to determine that your pregnancy is progressing normally.

+ The other possibility is that the bleeding or pain may continue or increase, and you may miscarry.

Unfortunately, it is usually not possible to determine which of these could happen during your emergency department visit. This can be very sad and disheartening, but it is important to understand that there is nothing that can be done to stop a miscarriage if it is going to occur.

HOW TO CARE FOR YOURSELF AT HOME

Follow up with your family doctor or specialty clinic to ensure the appropriate bloodwork and ultrasounds occur, as per the Emergency doctor's instructions. When the doctor sends you home:

- + Restrict your level of activity according to the doctor's instructions.
- + Do not douche or insert any creams or suppositories into the vagina.
- + Do not have sexual intercourse until your doctor has indicated that it is safe to do so.
- + Do not take baths while you are bleeding - shower instead.
- + Do not use tampons while you are bleeding - use sanitary pads instead.

WHEN TO GET HELP

Go to the nearest Emergency Department if you are experiencing any of the following:

- + The amount of bleeding increases.
(You need to change your pad more than twice an hour.)
- + You develop a fever.
- + You have pain that is more severe than mild menstrual cramps.
- + The pain becomes one sided.
- + You feel light-headed or dizzy.

Complications During Early Pregnancy - *Continued*

TO LEARN MORE ASK

- + Your family doctor.
- + HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to www.HealthLinkBC.ca

RECOMMENDED FOLLOW UP

- Follow up with your primary care provider in ___ days.

Reproduced with permission from Vancouver Coastal Health.

Find this information sheet on the BC Emergency Medicine Network website:
www.bcemn.ca/clinical_resource/complications-during-early-pregnancy/

bcemn.ca

The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health care team. This information does not replace the advice given to you by your health care provider.

