

Ectopic pregnancy and miscarriage: diagnosis and initial management

Information for the public

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Ectopic pregnancy and miscarriage: the care you should expect

Some women have pain or discomfort, or some bleeding, in the early stages of pregnancy. This is relatively common and it's often no cause for concern. But it can be a sign of problems with the pregnancy, such as a miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy.

Miscarriage is a loss of pregnancy, often in the first 3 months but sometimes later. A miscarriage happens in about 1 in 5 pregnancies. In an ectopic pregnancy, a fertilised egg starts to grow somewhere other than in the normal lining of the womb. It is less common than miscarriage and affects around 1 in 100 pregnancies.

An ectopic pregnancy may not show obvious signs, but it's important to diagnose and treat an ectopic pregnancy quickly because it can be a serious condition for the woman.

We want this guideline to make a difference to pregnant women who may go on to have a miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy, and their families, by making sure:

- GPs and other healthcare professionals can identify early signs of ectopic pregnancy or miscarriage and know when to refer women to a specialist service
- women can get an urgent appointment in a specialist early pregnancy clinic in their area
- scans and tests are used at the right time to diagnose early pregnancy problems.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your healthcare professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns. They should also:

- be sensitive to your feelings when they are explaining early pregnancy problems
- explain the different options for your care and exactly what to expect at each stage, giving you some information in writing too
- make sure you know what to do and who to contact if your symptoms get worse after you leave.

If you can't understand the information you are given, tell your healthcare professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Where can I find out more?

The NHS website has more information about [ectopic pregnancy](#) and [miscarriage](#).

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [The Miscarriage Association](#), 01924 200 799
- [The Ectopic Pregnancy Trust](#), 020 7733 2653
- [The Birth Trauma Association](#), support@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk
- [Tommy's](#), 0800 0147 800

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by ectopic pregnancy or miscarriage and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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