

## Pregnancy of unknown location (PUL)

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You have been diagnosed with of a condition called ‘pregnancy of unknown location’ (PUL). This information leaflet will help you to understand what this means and what happens next.

If there is anything that you don’t understand, or if you have any questions, please feel free to ask the clinic nurse.

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### What is a pregnancy of unknown location (PUL)?

This is a term that we use when you have a positive pregnancy test but the pregnancy cannot be seen on transvaginal (internal) ultrasound scan.

### How can I have a positive pregnancy test and not be able to see the baby on scan yet?

There are three possibilities:

- You may have a very early pregnancy, which is too small to be seen on scan. It is normal not to see a pregnancy on a scan until about 6 weeks. Pregnancy testing kits are now very sensitive and can detect pregnancy hormones just a few days after conception. Sometimes, this can give an unclear picture especially if you are unsure of the date of your last period or have irregular periods.
- You may have miscarried. Some women have already had pain/bleeding before attending clinic. A pregnancy test can stay positive for up to 2 -3 weeks following a miscarriage, until the hormones settle down completely.
- You may have an ectopic pregnancy.

### What is an ectopic pregnancy?

This is where the pregnancy grows outside of the womb. Commonly this will be in a fallopian tube or an ovary. An ectopic pregnancy is sadly a pregnancy that will not survive. For more information please see ‘Ectopic pregnancy’ leaflet.

## How do I find out what is happening with the pregnancy?

There are a number of things that help us to give you the answer.

- We start by asking you questions about your symptoms and any further relevant medical history.
- You may need an abdominal and/or internal examination.
- We take blood to assess your pregnancy hormone level (called BhCG).
- Normally, we will ask you to call the clinic after 6pm to find out the results and further management.

## How long before I get any answers?

We know that this is an anxious time. Waiting and uncertainty are always difficult and stressful but it is very important that we make the right diagnosis for you.

We normally require two blood tests (BhCG) which are done 48 hours apart. It is very important that you return to the clinic for the second blood test – the nurse in the clinic will ensure that you have an appointment.

- If an early pregnancy is expected the hormone levels between the two blood tests will have almost doubled. We would then arrange for you to have a repeat scan, The scan would be arranged normally 1-2 weeks later to allow the pregnancy time to develop so that it can be seen on scan. Sometimes, we may ask for a third blood test before arranging a repeat scan. .
- If a miscarriage is suspected the hormone levels would be falling significantly between the two blood tests. We would normally advise you to repeat a home pregnancy test after 2-3 weeks which we would expect to be negative. If you have sadly experienced a miscarriage the doctors and nurses in the clinic will give you further advice and ensure that you have adequate support and information.
- More information is available in 'Miscarriage' leaflet available from the clinic.
- Sometimes, we may need to do more than two blood tests to help us confirm a diagnosis. The doctors and nurses in the clinic will discuss this with you in detail and answer any queries or concerns that you have.
- In a suspected ectopic pregnancy, you will be reviewed in the clinic by one of our senior doctors to discuss further management. Written information on ectopic pregnancy is available for you.

## While I am waiting what do I need to look out for?

If you feel unwell at home in any way or your symptoms change, it is important that you call us on: 0118 322 7181 (this number is available 24/7).

You should contact the clinic if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Vaginal bleeding – heavier than a normal period or passing large clots (for example the size of your palm).

- Abdominal pain – any pain that increases or does not go away after taking mild painkillers.
- Feeling faint and dizzy – especially when standing up.
- If you develop pain in your shoulders.

**If any of these symptoms become severe please contact the clinic immediately or go to the nearest Emergency Department for further assessment.**

### Where can I get more information?

Emergency Gynaecology and Early Pregnancy Clinic at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, London Road, Reading, RG1 5AN

Telephone line: 0118 322 7181

Or you could contact:

The Ectopic Pregnancy Trust Phone  
Helpline: 020 7733 2653  
[www.ectopicpregnancy.org.uk](http://www.ectopicpregnancy.org.uk)

The Miscarriage Association  
01924 200799  
[www.miscarriageassociation.org](http://www.miscarriageassociation.org)

### References

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- Sagili H & Mohamed K. Pregnancy of unknown location: an evidence-based approach to management. The Obstetrician and Gynaecologist 2008 10: 224-230
- National Collaborating Centre for Women's and Children's Health. Commissioned by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence. Ectopic pregnancy and miscarriage: Diagnosis and initial management in early pregnancy of ectopic pregnancy and miscarriage. December 2012

Visit the Trust website at [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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