

Patient information

Management of pregnancy of unknown location (PUL)

Introduction

'Pregnancy of Unknown Location' (PUL) is a term used to classify a pregnancy when an internal (transvaginal) scan has been performed and no pregnancy has been visualised either inside or outside the womb.

You may have gone to the doctor with a positive pregnancy test, abdominal pain and/or vaginal bleeding.

If nothing can be seen on the scan, the possibilities could be either:

1. It is too early to diagnose a pregnancy either in the womb or outside
2. There is an ectopic pregnancy
3. You may have miscarried
4. Persistent PUL where the blood tests do not rise or fall as expected.

Usually if your symptoms are manageable we would recommend a 'wait and watch' policy.

Waiting for a repeat scan does not have any adverse effect on the outcome of the pregnancy.

Tests done

1. Blood tests

- a) Serum 'Human Chorionic Gonadotropin' (**HCG**): This is a pregnancy-specific hormone. Rise or fall of this hormone levels gives an idea of the progress or regress of pregnancy.

b) Full Blood count: This will tell us if you are anaemic or losing blood.

2. Internal scan

This will tell us if a pregnancy is visualised. An internal scan gives more information than an external scan. This will not harm the pregnancy.

Management options offered

1. Expectant management

If you are well it may be recommended we continue to wait and watch until a more definite picture emerges. This may need many blood tests at 48 hour intervals. 44 - 69% of PUL settle down without medical intervention.

2. Medical management

If you are clinically well but the HCG levels are not rising or falling appropriately and the scan is still not conclusive, we would suggest an injection to help the pregnancy cells get reabsorbed. This medication (methotrexate) will help reabsorb the pregnancy wherever it is located. You need to be aware that this may take a few weeks of monitoring before we see results. You may also experience pain on day 3 or 4 after the injection. You will need to come for regular blood tests to see if the injection is working. You may in some cases need a second injection.

We would also advise against falling pregnant for at least 3 months after the injection.

3. Surgical management

If your pain increases or if you get symptoms of dizziness or shoulder pain we would offer surgery as these symptoms may indicate internal bleeding due to an ectopic pregnancy. You will be offered a **Laparoscopy** (keyhole surgery), or a **Laparotomy** (traditional "open" surgery with a larger incision). In 3% of cases we may not see anything on laparoscopy.

We understand that this could be a prolonged process until we actually reach a diagnosis. It may involve many blood tests and scans before we can say what is going on. If at any point you would like to discuss anything further please contact the numbers given below.

Please **contact the ward** if you experience any of the following, as these symptoms may indicate internal bleeding due to an ectopic pregnancy:

1. Increased pain
2. Increased bleeding
3. Shoulder pain
4. Dizziness

Useful contact numbers

Gynaecology Ward: 01284 713235 or 01284 713236 (open 24 hours)

Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit (EPAU): 01284 713143 between 9.00am and 4.00pm Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays)

<http://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/ma2006/information/leaflets.htm>

Thank you for reading this leaflet, should you wish to provide us with feedback on any part of your experience please email EPAUuserfeedback@wsh.nhs.uk
Please note this email is NO REPLY and is not checked regularly. Should you have a medical emergency please seek alternative medical advice or attend A&E if required.

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust is actively involved in clinical research. Your doctor, clinical team or the research and development department may contact you regarding specific clinical research studies that you might be interested in participating in. If you do not wish to be contacted for these purposes, please email info.gov@wsh.nsh.uk. This will in no way affect the care or treatment you receive.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo)
<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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