



Belfast Health and
Social Care Trust

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Pregnancy of unknown location



At your clinic appointment today, it was not possible to reassure you that your pregnancy was progressing normally in your uterus.

A very early, normal pregnancy may not be visible if the scan is done too early. If we can't see a pregnancy in your womb at a stage when we would expect to see it (between 5 and 6 weeks) there are 3 possibilities:

1. The pregnancy is normal and in the womb but not quite as far on as the dates of the last menstrual period would indicate. This is not uncommon, lots of women have cycles that vary in length so conception may have occurred later in the cycle
2. The pregnancy is in the womb but not progressing normally or the mother has already had a complete miscarriage
3. The pregnancy is not in the womb ie. an ectopic pregnancy. It is sometimes possible to see an ectopic pregnancy on the scan, but this is not usual.

An ectopic pregnancy can be dangerous for the mother and may require either surgery or drug treatment, but the vast majority of 'pregnancies of unknown location' are not ectopic pregnancies.

What happens next?

Your midwife will ask you questions to try to assess which of the 3 possibilities applies to you.

She may suggest a rescan if she feels that the pregnancy is just very early.

She may think that you have had a miscarriage already and will ask you to repeat your pregnancy test in one or two weeks.

She may be worried that you have an ectopic pregnancy and take a blood test. The blood test measures your serum bHCG (the same hormone that gives you a positive pregnancy test). We know that if the pregnancy is in the womb and progressing normally, when the level reaches 1500 iu/l, the pregnancy WILL be visible on a transvaginal scan. The midwife will ring you with the results of your blood test and discuss the next step. If the level is under 1500, it will probably need to be repeated usually, but not always, 48 hours later. If the level is over 1500, you will be called back for a repeat scan and possible treatment for an ectopic pregnancy.

If you have questions, your midwife is there to help you and support you through this worrying time.