

An ongoing pregnancy associated with vaginal bleeding is called a threatened miscarriage. The first symptoms are usually vaginal bleeding with or without mild cramping (or period-type pain). The bleeding can occur at any time after a missed period. It is often noticed when going to the bathroom as pink, brown, or red discharge on the toilet paper. The amount of bleeding may vary from just spotting to a gush with clots. The diagnosis of threatened miscarriage is made with the help of an ultrasound scan. At 7 weeks of pregnancy, the ultrasound scan will be able to see your tiny baby and the scan will also show a heartbeat, particularly if it is a vaginal scan. Sometimes the scan may show up a small haematoma (blood clot) around the pregnancy sac, which is often the source of the bleeding but more often nothing abnormal is seen.

It is not often possible to give an explanation as to why this bleeding occurs. In many cases the pregnancy continues safely. The likely causes of bleeding may be:

- The implantation site: As your placenta tries to burrow itself into the lining of the uterus, it may cause some blood vessels of the uterus to bleed.
- The cervix: During pregnancy, the opening to your uterus, the cervix, has lots of blood flow. As a result, anything that touches your cervix (e.g. a Pap test, intercourse, etc.) can bring on bleeding.
- The vagina: Yeast infections or any other infection may cause spotting or bleeding from the vagina.

A baby's heartbeat on ultrasound is reassuring. In the presence of a heart beat there is an 85 to 97% chance of your pregnancy continuing. If a collection of blood around the sac is seen on ultrasound scan, you may be offered an appointment for a rescan within 1 to 2 weeks. Alternatively this may be checked at a later ultrasound. When no cause of bleeding is seen, no follow-up is required.

Although bed rest was recommended in the past for threatened miscarriages, it did not decrease miscarriage rates. There is no specific treatment to stop your bleeding. There may be increased bleeding noted when you get up to go to the toilet; this is normal. Having sexual intercourse during pregnancy does not have any adverse outcomes.

Please come to the emergency room if:

- Your bleeding increases and becomes heavy or you start to feel lightheaded or dizzy.
- You start to feel unwell with fevers (greater than 37.8°C), chills, muscle aches or pains, unpleasant smelling discharge, or severe pain.