We have written this information leaflet to provide you with advice about pain and bleeding in early pregnancy.

If you are pregnant, any amount of vaginal bleeding or abdominal pain can be frightening and make you worry about your unborn baby. However, many women may experience these symptoms during the first trimester of pregnancy (12 weeks), it does not necessarily indicate a problem or the start of a miscarriage. In fact the majority of women will go on and have normal pregnancies.

Is vaginal bleeding in early pregnancy a common problem?

Yes, bleeding in early pregnancy is very common and can occur at any time after you miss your period along with mild period type pain. Women often notice a bleed when going to the toilet as a smear of pink, brown or red loss on the toilet paper. The amount of bleeding may vary from just spotting to a gush with clots.

What are the common causes of bleeding and pain in early pregnancy?

Some common causes for bleeding and pain in early pregnancy are:

- **The implantation site.** As the placenta attaches itself into the lining of your uterus (womb), it may cause some blood vessels of the womb to bleed.

- **A haematoma.** This is small area of bleeding, like a bruise, next to your pregnancy sac. A haematoma will usually be reabsorbed by the body or come away naturally as a brown coloured vaginal discharge.

- **The cervix.** During pregnancy, tissues become rich in blood supply and soften. As a result of this, any slight trauma to the cervix (neck of the womb) can cause bleeding. You may be offered an internal examination to assess this and vaginal swabs might also be taken to check for infection.

- **The vagina.** Common infections like Thrush or other infections may cause bleeding from the inflamed vagina in the form of spots of blood. You may be offered an internal examination to assess this and vaginal swabs might also be taken to identify the type of infection.

- **Constipation.** This is a common cause for pain in early pregnancy. The bowel becomes lazy, because of the effect of the pregnancy hormones and you may find that you go to the toilet less frequently to have your bowels opened. This can cause a build up of faeces in the bowel which leads to abdominal pain.

- **Urine infection.** This is also very common in pregnancy. You may be asked to provide a urine sample so that this can be tested for infections.
What should I do if I start to bleed or experience abdominal pains?

Contact your GP or midwife who will assess you. If your GP or midwife thinks it is necessary they will refer you to the Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit (EPAU). You will usually be given an appointment within 24 to 48 hours.

If your symptoms of pain and/or bleeding are very bad you may be referred directly as an emergency to the gynaecology unit.

What happens in the EPAU?

First, you will be seen and assessed by a nurse. A trained sonographer (this may be a nurse, doctor or sonography technician) will then perform an ultrasound scan. If you are less than 8 weeks pregnant this will usually be done vaginally. The EPAU offers training for trainee sonographers. If a trainee is present you will always be informed and asked if you are happy for them to perform your scan.

You will usually be given the results of the scan either during the scan, or shortly afterwards.

If all is well, the sonographer will be able to detect a small pregnancy sac and tiny baby with a heart beat from approximately 6 weeks of pregnancy.

A baby’s heartbeat on ultrasound is reassuring (you will see but not hear the baby's heart beat at this stage).

In the presence of a heart beat, there is an 85-97% chance of your pregnancy continuing. Sometimes the scan may show up a haematoma around the pregnancy sac, which identifies the source of the bleeding. Sometimes it is not possible to give an explanation as to why this bleeding occurs. In most cases the pregnancy continues safely.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact:

- Gynaecology Ward G1: 0114 226 8225