



PATIENT EDUCATION

*Bleeding During the 1st
Trimester of Pregnancy*

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Is Bleeding During the 1st Trimester Common?

Bleeding in early pregnancy happens in 15 to 25 out of 100 pregnancies. In many cases, this bleeding does not signal a problem. Bleeding later in pregnancy can be more serious.

Contact your health care provider if you have bleeding during your pregnancy. See also “When To Get Medical Help.”

For more information

If you have questions after you read this, contact a member of your obstetric care team.

Causes for 1st Trimester Bleeding

Bleeding during the first trimester can happen for a few reasons. The most common reasons are shared here.

Vaginal or cervical issues

Some bleeding in the vagina or cervix could be caused by:

- Irritation after sex, a vaginal exam or a Pap exam.
- An inflammation of or a growth in the vagina or cervical area.
- A sensitive cervix. This condition is called cervical friability.
- An infection in the cervix. This is often caused by an infection transmitted during sex.

Implantation bleeding

Implantation bleeding is light bleeding or spotting that happens when the egg implants in the lining of the uterus. This happens about 1 to 2 weeks after the egg is fertilized.

Implantation bleeding usually happens around the time you would expect to have a menstrual period. But this bleeding is lighter than menstrual bleeding. You may think it is a light period. If you have this kind of bleeding, you may not know that you are pregnant.

Implantation bleeding stops on its own. You do not need medical care for this type of bleeding.

Subchorionic bleeding

Subchorionic bleeding occurs around the gestational sac or placenta. It is often caused by partial separation of the placenta from the uterus. This type of bleeding also is called subchorionic hemorrhage.

A little bleeding typically does not cause problems. But a lot of bleeding may lead to miscarriage.

Miscarriage

Miscarriage is the sudden end of a pregnancy before the 20th week. About 10% to 20% of known pregnancies end in miscarriage. The actual number is likely higher. Many miscarriages happen very early in pregnancy. They may happen before the pregnancy is known.

Most miscarriages happen because the fetus was not developing as expected. Usually this is a random event. In almost every case, miscarriage is no one's fault.

Symptoms of a miscarriage include:

- Vaginal spotting or bleeding.
- Pain or cramping in the abdomen or lower back.
- Fluid or tissue discharge.

Symptoms vary for each person. The timing of the miscarriage also affects the symptoms.

Ectopic pregnancy

An ectopic pregnancy occurs when a fertilized egg does not implant in the uterus. The most common place to implant outside of the uterus is in one of the fallopian tubes. This is called a tubal pregnancy. Another place it could implant is in an ovary.

As the fertilized egg grows, it could cause the fallopian tube or ovary to burst. Heavy blood loss inside the abdomen is likely. Blood loss may cause weakness, fainting, pain, shock or even death.

Other implantation areas are the abdominal cavity and the lower part of the uterus.

Sometimes bleeding from the vagina is the only symptom of an ectopic pregnancy. Other symptoms could be pain in the abdomen, pelvic area or shoulder. These symptoms can happen before you even know you are pregnant.



If you have any of these symptoms, call your care team right away. The pregnancy will not survive. The fertilized egg must be removed right away. This is done using surgery or a specific type of medicine.

Other causes of first trimester bleeding

- **Molar pregnancy.** A molar pregnancy happens when a fertilized egg develops into another type of tissue. It does not develop into a baby. This is a rare problem. It may be seen during an ultrasound exam. If you have a history of molar pregnancy, tell your care team.
- **Heterotopic pregnancy.** This type of pregnancy involves more than one fetus. One develops in the uterus. The other develops outside the uterus. This development outside the uterus often happens in a fallopian tube. It also can happen in the cervix or an ovary. Abdominal pain and bleeding are common symptoms. This condition may be seen during an ultrasound exam.
- **More than one fetus.** The risk of bleeding increases when there is more than one fetus in the uterus. Bleeding may happen as the placenta and uterus grow. The fetuses can be seen on an ultrasound exam.

When To Get Medical Help

When to call your care team

Call your care team right away if:

- You have any bleeding during your pregnancy.
- You have any of the symptoms shared here.



When to go to an emergency care center

If you have any of the problems listed, call 911 or your local emergency phone number right away. Or have someone drive you to the nearest emergency care center right away. Do not first call your care team. Do not drive yourself.

- **Moderate to heavy bleeding.**
- **Bleeding along with pain, cramps, fever, chills or contractions.**
- **Passing a large blood clot.** This clot would be about 2 inches or larger. It could be about the size of a small egg or a golf ball.
- **Severe abdominal pain or pain in your shoulder.**
- **Any of these signs of infection:**
 - A temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or greater.
 - Chills.
 - An increase in pain or pain not helped by pain medicine.
 - New drainage or an increase in drainage from the vagina.
 - A bad-smelling odor coming from the vagina.

Notes

Notes

This material is for your education and information only. This content does not replace medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. New medical research may change this information. If you have questions about a medical condition, always talk with your health care provider.

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BARBARA WOODWARD LIPS PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER

Mrs. Lips, a resident of San Antonio, Texas, was a loyal Mayo Clinic patient of more than 40 years and a self-made business leader who significantly expanded her family's activities in oil, gas and ranching. Upon her death in 1995, Mrs. Lips paid the ultimate compliment by leaving her entire estate to Mayo Clinic. By naming the Barbara Woodward Lips Patient Education Center, Mayo honors her generosity, her love of learning, her belief in patient empowerment and her dedication to high-quality care.

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