Patient Information Sheet

Information for Women with a Pregnancy of Unknown Location (PUL)

This information is for women who have a pregnancy of unknown location (PUL). It explains what a PUL is and what tests you will need.

What is a PUL?
A Pregnancy of Unknown Location (PUL) is when you have a positive pregnancy test but we have been unable to see the pregnancy.

What does this mean?
There are three possible reasons:-

- **The pregnancy is too early to see on scan.** Commercially available pregnancy testing kits are now extremely sensitive and can sometimes detect the pregnancy hormone just a few days after conception. However a pregnancy may not be seen on ultrasound until approximately 3 weeks after conception (at least 5 weeks from your last period). This results in women attending the Early Pregnancy Unit with a pregnancy that is probably in the correct place but is too early for us to see.

- **An early miscarriage has occurred.** If you have had heavy bleeding it could be that an early miscarriage has occurred and is now complete.

- **The pregnancy is outside the uterus (womb) most commonly in the fallopian tube.** This is called an ‘ectopic’ pregnancy. It is the least likely possibility but if ignored an ectopic pregnancy is potentially life threatening. Until we can see a pregnancy inside the womb we cannot exclude an ectopic pregnancy.

What happens next?
To help us find out where the pregnancy is developing we need to look at the pregnancy hormone level and how much it increases over a 48-hour period. You will need to have two blood tests. **It is important that we have two blood samples to compare.** One sample will not give us enough information to exclude an ectopic pregnancy.

- In a **normal pregnancy** that is in the uterus (womb) we expect the pregnancy hormone level to double every 48 hours.
- In an **ectopic pregnancy** the level will not double but will rise slightly or stay the same.
- If a **miscarriage** has occurred then the level should come down.
Unfortunately the blood levels of a failing pregnancy can sometimes mimic an ectopic pregnancy. In certain situations we may need to repeat the blood test to reach a definitive diagnosis.

**It is important that you return to the unit for the second blood test.** You can telephone us on 020 8725 0093 for the result the following day. When you telephone the unit we will advise you about any follow up arrangements you need to make and make an appointment for you if necessary.

**Who should I contact in an emergency?**

**Early Pregnancy Unit:**
Monday to Saturday 08.30 to 11.00 hours
020 8725 0093

**Acute Gynaecology Unit:**
Monday to Saturday 09.00 to 21.00 hours
020 8725 1762 or dial 020 8672 1255 and ask for Bleep 7309 or 6666

**For evening emergencies:**

Emergency Early Pregnancy Unit Doctor
Every day 21.00 to 09.00 hours
020 8672 1255 and ask for Bleep 6666

If you are in pain or bleeding and you cannot contact anyone on the above telephone numbers please go immediately to your nearest A&E department. Call an ambulance if necessary.

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