

A Guide to Understanding a Pregnancy of Uncertain Viability

The ultrasound examination has shown a pregnancy of uncertain viability. This information leaflet will help you to understand what this means and what will happen next.

What is a pregnancy of uncertain viability?

This is a term used when the ultrasound shows a pregnancy in the womb, but the scan cannot confirm if the pregnancy is one that will develop normally or may miscarry. An embryo may not be seen, or it may be too small to expect to see a heartbeat. It will not be possible to tell you if the pregnancy will continue to be successful, based on a single scan. In cases of pregnancies of uncertain viability, a repeat ultrasound scan will be necessary.

When will I have another scan?

A normal pregnancy sac and embryo will grow a tiny amount each day. Therefore, a repeat ultrasound appointment will only be made for you 7-14 days after your first scan. By allowing this time, the repeat scan will be able to accurately assess any growth and development of the pregnancy. We understand that waiting is a very anxious time, but if we carry out a repeat scan too early, it is likely that the scan may still be inconclusive.

What are the possible outcomes on the follow up scan?

1. *Viable Pregnancy:* Where an embryo is seen with a detectable heartbeat. This means that your pregnancy is continuing and will likely continue normally.
2. *Missed Miscarriage:* Sadly, no growth or developments are noted in the pregnancy sac or embryo, but the pregnancy is still in the womb. If you experience a missed miscarriage, the sonographer will go through different options regarding how to manage the miscarriage, based on what your wishes are. The doctor on duty will also see you at this time.
3. *Complete Miscarriage:* If you have experienced bleeding in between scans, unfortunately you may have passed the pregnancy before the follow-up scan. This means that that you don't require any medical intervention or medications.
4. *Incomplete Miscarriage:* Where you have been bleeding, but not all the pregnancy tissue has passed, and the lining of the uterus is still thick. Most likely, you will need a follow up scan in 2 weeks. Occasionally you may need to see a doctor for further management. The sonographer will discuss these options with you at the time.
5. *Pregnancy of Uncertain Viability:* Where growth has been noted in the embryo, but a heartbeat cannot be visualised. We try to make this outcome the least likely, by leaving at least 7 days between ultrasound scans.

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Is there anything I can do to ensure this is a pregnancy continues normally?

Unfortunately, there is nothing that you, or the medical professionals can do, to stop this from being a miscarriage. Previously, if a woman had early pregnancy bleeding bedrest was recommended, this is not the case anymore.

If bleeding, please do not use tampons; but instead use sanitary towels or panty liners. This way, you will be able to assess the amount of bleeding more easily and reduce the risk of infection. We advise you to avoid strenuous activity, not to exercise, gentle short walks only, not to swim or have sex until the blood loss has completely stopped.

Can I return to work?

This is dependent on you and how you feel. Many women choose to return to work until after their follow-up scan. Normal physical activities can be resumed once you feel that you are ready, but it is not unusual to feel tired and emotional until your next scan. We can provide a letter for your employer as necessary.

What should I do if I have a problem before my next scan?

If you develop cramping, lower abdominal pain or bleeding, it may be a sign that you are miscarrying. Sadly, there is nothing we can do in hospital to stop this from happening and you may be more comfortable staying at home. However, if at any stage the pain or bleeding is unmanageable, you should contact/attend the CUMH emergency room or your nearest maternity hospital for assessment.

If you have any questions or worries please phone Cork University Maternity Hospital
If you were due to be seen at the community early pregnancy unit and there are changes in your symptoms or concerns. It is important to please phone us directly or the CUMH emergency room which is open 24 hours for advice +/-assessment as it may be more appropriate to look after you in the CUMH.

Reception	(021) 4920500
Emergency Room	(021) 4920545
Early Pregnancy Unit	(021) 4927441
Bereavement & Loss Service	(021) 4920500
2 South Ward	(021) 4920628