

Pregnancy of unknown viability



At your clinic appointment today, it was not possible to reassure you that your pregnancy was progressing normally.

To be sure that the pregnancy is progressing normally, we need to see the baby's heart beat. It can be difficult to see in very early pregnancy, but when the baby measures 7mm, if the heart beat is there, we will be able to see it. The baby is 7mm at between 6 and 7 weeks of pregnancy.

Sometimes the baby never develops to a large enough size to be seen. If we can see a pregnancy sac that measures more than 25mm, if the baby is developing normally, we will see it (although sometimes it will still be too small to see a heartbeat) The pregnancy sac is 25mm at between 5 and 6 weeks of pregnancy.

If we say you have a pregnancy of unknown viability it means we have seen a sac less than 25mm in diameter or a fetal pole of less than 7mm. You will be asked to return for a further scan in not less than 7 days. If we see you sooner, we may still not be able to be sure and you will have had a wasted trip.

Whether the pregnancy is developing normally or not, we should be able to make a diagnosis at your second visit.

Pregnancies of unknown viability are either normal ongoing pregnancies (often earlier than a woman's menstrual date would suggest) or miscarriages. We are very anxious that we don't diagnose a miscarriage when the pregnancy is ongoing - this is why we insist on an interval of at least 7 days between scans. If the pregnancy is miscarrying there is nothing that can be done to prevent it and waiting is not dangerous for the mother. If the pregnancy is ongoing and a repeat scan was done too soon, a miscarriage could be wrongly diagnosed and the mother could be offered treatment to empty her uterus.

If you have questions, your midwife is there to help you and support you through this worrying time.

