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EPAU Service Pathway - For Vaginal Bleeding and Abdominal Pain in Early Pregnancy

Patient presents to GP with vaginal bleeding and/or abdominal pain in pregnancy and is <16 weeks pregnant

GP to assess. Any **red flags** present, e.g.

- Hypotension (< 100/60 mmHg)
- Tachycardia (> 100 bpm)
- Dizziness/fainting/loss of consciousness
- Severe abdominal tenderness on examination
- Shoulder tip pain
- Signs of shock
- New GI symptoms or urinary retention
- Cervical motion tenderness

No

Complete EPAU referral form and email to huh-tr.epau.referrals@nhs.net for an appointment for a scan within 48 hours.

Safety net with patient and advise them to attend ED if any red flags develop.

Yes

Refer to on call gynaecologist (bleep 005 via Homerton switchboard 0208 510 5555) for urgent assessment in ED

If >16 weeks pregnant, refer **urgently** to the Emergency Obstetric Unit via bleep 364

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EPAU service

The Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit (EPAU) is a specialist clinic that manages early pregnancy problems such as vaginal bleeding and abdominal pain. They see patients in the first 16 weeks of pregnancy only. After 16 weeks, the patient is seen in the Emergency Obstetric Unit or Delivery Suite.

Making an appointment

Appointments can be made by GPs or other health care professionals by emailing the referral form (see appendix 1) to huh-tr.epau.referrals@nhs.net. Referrals are accepted via email and are managed daily. Patients are triaged by the nurse specialist team, and they will be offered an ultrasound scan within 48 hours. Referrals on Friday after 17:00pm will be reviewed on Saturday 8:30am-16:30pm and any referral received after this time will be reviewed on the Monday before 12:00pm.

Patients should be informed to email huh-tr.epau.referrals@nhs.net if they have not received an appointment. In addition, they should contact call their GP practice if no appointment is received after 48 hours. All patients should be given safety netting advise to attend ED if any red flag symptoms develop.

Self referral

Some patients can also self-refer themselves to the clinic for a reassurance scan by emailing huh-tr.epau.referrals@nhs.net. This is only if the patient has had:

- a previous miscarriage, or
- a previous ectopic pregnancy, or
- a previous molar pregnancy.

Patients who are not bleeding or experiencing pain should wait until they are at least 7 weeks pregnant to have an ultrasound scan. This is to ensure that a pregnancy can be detected.

The early pregnancy clinic is located in the emergency gynaecology unit and a map can be found here.

The appointment

1. The clinical nurse specialist will usually speak to the patient first and ask some questions

2. A urine pregnancy test will be performed
3. They will then have an ultrasound scan. This is performed to visualise the pregnancy. The scan should be performed through the vagina as first line, especially if this is the first scan in the pregnancy, or alternatively externally though the abdomen. Neither of these scans is harmful to the pregnancy.
4. After the scan, the clinical nurse specialist will discuss the scan report with the patient. They may book a follow up appointment if needed. This may be for a repeat scan or blood tests.

Patient information can be found here:

https://www.homerton.nhs.uk/epau/

Early pregnancy information websites

www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

https://ectopic.org.uk

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Appendix 1 EARLY PREGNANCY ASSESSMENT UNIT (EPAU)

PATIENT DETAILS	
HOSPITAL NUMBER:	NHS NUMBER:
FIRST NAME:	SURNAME:
DATE OF BIRTH:	MOBILE NUMBER:
ADDRESS:	

REFERRAL DETAILS	
GP NAME: GP ADDRESS:	GP PHONE NUMBER: DATE OF REFFERAL:

Referral Indication: (Please tick all relevant boxes) *If you feel your case is particularly urgent or unusual, please contact the Unit directly to discuss further AND complete this form.*	☐ Vaginal bleeding ☐ Abdominal pain ☐ Previous miscarriage ☐ High risk for ectopic pregnancy (previous ectopic, previous tubal surgery, PID, IUD in situ) ☐ Persistent bleeding post miscarriage / termination ☐ Other (Please indicate) _____

Pregnancy Status: All fields below are mandatory for an appointment in our Unit	
CONFIRMED POSITIVE PREGNANCY TEST: YES/NO (*Only women post- medical/surgical management of miscarriage / termination are exempt)* DATE:	LMP: GESTATION (must be less than 16 weeks): _____weeks (approx.)

Please CONFIRM:
Patient has had a first trimester ultrasound confirming an intrauterine pregnancy in this pregnancy YES/NO

Patient known to be Rhesus negative YES/NO

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References:

- NICE guidance Ectopic pregnancy and miscarriage: diagnosis and initial management
- Written and approved by ICEC: January 2026