

Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit (EPAU)

EPAU is a specialist unit which manages early pregnancy problems such as:

- Vaginal bleeding
- Abdominal pain

We also see women who have had problems in previous pregnancies:

- Previous ectopic pregnancy
- Previous molar pregnancy
- Recurrent miscarriage (3 or more miscarriages in a row with the same partner)

You must have had a positive pregnancy test and be 6-16 weeks pregnant before you can be seen in an EPAU clinic. A Doctor, Nurse or Midwife will have arranged an appointment for you.

This leaflet aims to help you prepare for your appointment. The EPAU staff wants to make sure your visit is as safe and comfortable as possible.

Where is EPAU

- EPAU is located on Cley Ward, West Block, Level 3.
- Please use the West Atrium entrance and follow the signs for The Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit or Cley Ward.
- If you are travelling by car and need to park, the closest car parks are C and D. Pay machines are positioned near the hospital entrances/exits.

Can I Bring Someone With Me?

You are welcome to bring your partner or a friend/relative. If you have a scan, with your permission, one person will be allowed into the scan room.

We advise you to make alternative arrangements for children. If you are unable to arrange childcare, please be aware you are responsible for the safety of your children at all times.

Do I need to do anything special before coming to the Unit?

- You may eat and drink as normal.
- You may need to undress from the waist down, so wear clothing which is easy to get on and off.
- If you have notes from your Community Midwife, please bring those with you.

How long will I be there?

Each appointment is 20 minutes long and we try to run the clinic on time. However, this is not always possible, and your visit could last up to 2 hours.

Who will I see when I get to the Unit?

You will need to see the Receptionist on your arrival. She will record up to date details of your:

- Name (e.g. if now married)
- Address
- Contact Telephone numbers
- Next of Kin and/or who we may contact in an emergency

You may also see a:

- Nurse
- Doctor: male or female
- Health Care Assistant
- Sonographer (a person who specialises in Ultrasound scanning):
male/female
- Specialist nurse sonographer

The Norfolk and Norwich Hospital is a teaching centre for doctors, nurses and midwives. It is therefore possible that students (medical student, student nurse or midwife) will be present in clinic. If you do not wish a student to observe your care, please let a staff member know and the student will be asked to leave.

What Will Happen During My Clinic Appointment?

After booking into the clinic, you may see a nurse who will ask you questions about your current pregnancy, past pregnancies if any and any relevant medical history.

Most women will then have an ultrasound scan, performed by a doctor or a specialist nurse or a sonographer (EPAU staff), to help us find the cause of your pain and/or bleeding.

What Is an Ultrasound Scan?

Ultrasound works by sending out sound waves to your uterus (womb). When the sound waves reach the Uterus, they bounce back and a computer translates the echoing sound into pictures.

The ultrasound scan may be done in two ways depending on how many weeks pregnant you are.

Transvaginal (Internal) Scan

If you are between 6-12 weeks, with your permission, we recommend a transvaginal scan.

At this early stage in the pregnancy a vaginal scan gets closer to your uterus and gives a better picture than an abdominal scan. A female chaperone will be present throughout the examination.

The vaginal probe should not cause any discomfort when used. Before the scan you will be asked to go to the toilet and empty your bladder completely.

You will then have to undress from the waist down and lie on a couch with a blanket covering your bottom half. A condom like cover and sterile lubricating gel are placed over the vaginal probe before it is gently inserted into the vagina.

The EPAU staff performing the scan will usually concentrate on getting good pictures before showing you the screen and talking to you about what he/she has seen.

Once you are dressed the EPAU staff will talk to you about the results of the scan. You may also be given the opportunity to speak to the nurse and receive written information.

Abdominal (Tummy) Scan

If you are 12-16 weeks pregnant, we will perform an abdominal scan. A female chaperone will be present throughout the examination.

You need a full bladder for an abdominal scan as this pushes the bladder up and gives a better picture.

You will be asked to lie on your back and some gel is placed on your abdomen below the umbilicus (navel). An instrument called a transducer is placed on top of the gel and moved backwards and forward across the abdomen. If you need a more detailed scan, we will ask your permission to do a transvaginal scan.

Do I need to drink lots of fluid and have a full bladder?

This will depend on the number of weeks of pregnancy. If you are between 6-12 weeks, we prefer to do a transvaginal scan which in fact requires an empty bladder.

If you are between 12-16 weeks pregnant, we will perform an abdominal scan which requires a full bladder. You should drink lots of fluid and have a full bladder only if you are between 12-16 weeks pregnant.

Will an Internal Scan be done if I am bleeding?

Yes, we are used to scanning women who are bleeding and this is not a problem for us. The condom like cover helps to keep everything clean and the probe is wiped with an alcohol disinfectant between scans.

Will an internal scan harm the baby?

A scan is not known to harm you or your baby. Ultrasound scanning is considered safe in pregnancy.

What happens after the scan?

The following are likely results of your scan:

- We should be able to see that the pregnancy is progressing well and reassure you before discharging you back to the care of your Doctor and Midwife.
- We may have to rescan you in a week or two before we can be sure if the pregnancy is healthy.
- Sadly some women who attend EPAU will be diagnosed with a miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy which requires treatment and sometimes an admission.
- The scan may not explain your symptoms in which case we will ask you to have a blood test or a series of blood tests.
 - BHCG (Beta Human Chorionic Gonadotrophin)
 - Progesterone

This will measure the quantity of pregnancy hormones in your blood and may help us understand what is causing your symptoms.

If you have a blood test, we usually telephone you later that day with the result and a follow up plan.

If you have been referred please call EPAU directly between 8.30am and 5pm Monday to Friday, or 8.30am to 1pm at weekends, to book your appointment.

You will be offered the next available appointment (usually within 48 hours), or one that is appropriate for your expected dates. This may not be on the same day you call the department.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff at the following address:

Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit
Cley Ward, Level 3, West Block
Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Colney Lane
Norwich
Norfolk NR4 7UY

Telephone number: **(01603) 286252**

Web: www.nnuh.nhs.uk