



PREGNANCY OF UNKNOWN LOCATION

What is a pregnancy of unknown location?

A pregnancy of unknown location is when you have a positive pregnancy test (usually a blood test called beta human chorionic gonadotropin, or beta-hCG), but the pregnancy is not visible on ultrasound.

Pregnancy of unknown location describes a temporary state until a final diagnosis is made of one of the following:

1. A **normally developing pregnancy** inside the uterus
2. An **ectopic pregnancy** (a pregnancy outside the uterus and usually inside of the fallopian tubes)
3. An **early pregnancy loss**

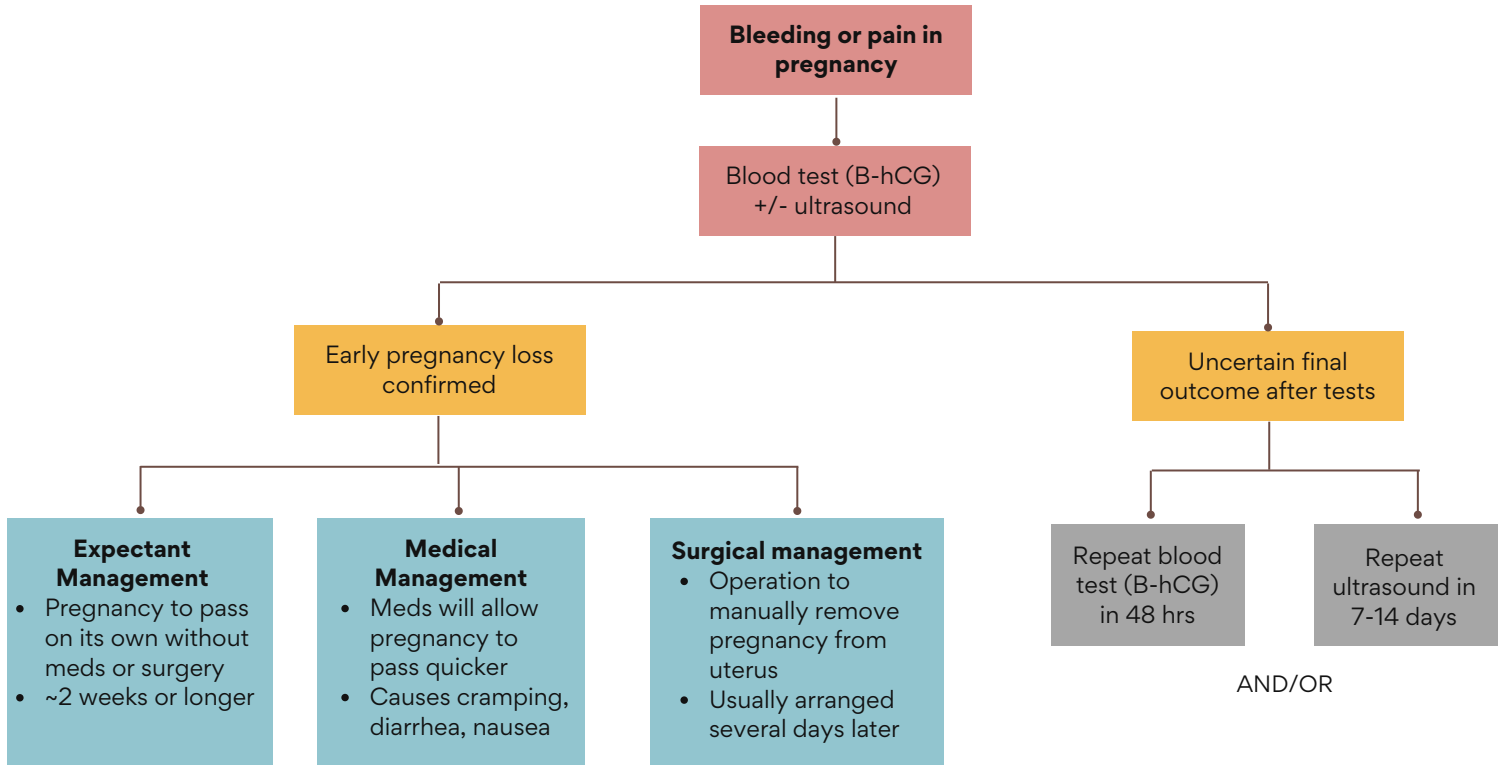
Most pregnancies of unknown location are intrauterine pregnancies that are too small to be seen yet. But until a location is confirmed, a pregnancy of unknown location should be considered a possible ectopic pregnancy, as they can be life threatening if not discovered in a timely manner.

This requires timely follow-up with your family physician, obstetrical care provider, or an early pregnancy clinic. If none of these options are available to you, follow-up care will be arranged in the emergency department.

How do we figure out the location of the pregnancy?

Typically, we measure beta-hCG twice, with blood tests taken 48 hours apart. Whether beta-hCG is increasing, decreasing or plateaued determines the next steps in care and the potential need for further ultrasounds or blood tests.

We also may repeat your ultrasound in 7-14 days to determine the location of the pregnancy, and whether there is a pregnancy loss.



When should I seek medical attention?

If you are experiencing vaginal bleeding or pain, you should seek medical attention. You should contact your family physician, midwife, or obstetrician. If none of these options are available to you in the next one to three days, you should go to your local emergency department.

RED FLAGS

However, you should go to the emergency department immediately if you:

- Suddenly have severe pain in your abdomen that is not going away or lessened by with acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Suddenly feel faint or like you are passing out
- Have very heavy bleeding (soaking more than three pads in three hours)
- Have chills or a fever higher than 38°C (100.4°F)