

## Bleeding in early pregnancy

### Heke toto i te taiawa o te wā āhua moata

About one in every five women may have some bleeding in their first 14 weeks of pregnancy (first trimester). It's natural to worry, but it doesn't necessarily mean that you're having a miscarriage.

Most women who have spotting or light bleeding in early pregnancy will go on to have a healthy pregnancy and baby. Only one or two out of 10 women who experience bleeding in early pregnancy will be having a miscarriage.



Bleeding can vary from light bleeding or spotting (dark brown to light pink), to heavier bleeding.

Spotting means you sometimes notice a few drops of blood in your underwear, or you wipe yourself with tissue and see a little blood on the paper. There shouldn't be enough blood to cover a panty liner.

With heavier bleeding, you'll need a liner or pad to keep the blood from soaking through your underwear.

If you have spotting or bleeding, make an appointment to see your midwife or GP. There's never any cost to see your midwife. There should be no cost to see a doctor about your pregnancy for the first 14 weeks, since care is subsidised.

### Spotting or light vaginal bleeding

You can wait to see your midwife or GP for up to 24 to 48 hours if you have spotting or light bleeding (needing a liner but not a pad). Don't go to the emergency department. Waiting might feel stressful, but no treatment can change what will happen. Often the pregnancy is fine, and the bleeding will stop on its own.

Your midwife or GP can arrange blood tests (known as hCG) or an ultrasound to check on your pregnancy. The ultrasound can often be done quicker this way than in the hospital. If the scan shows a normal healthy pregnancy, there may be a cost for the scan, as the ultrasonographer will perform a dating scan at the same time. For more information about costs, refer to the scan provider's website. There's no charge for the scan if you have a Community Services Card or if the scan shows a problem.

Your midwife or GP will decide what to do next based on the results of your ultrasound.



### Moderate vaginal bleeding

You should see your midwife or a doctor more urgently if:

- you're bleeding enough to soak through a sanitary pad (not a liner) within two to four hours
- you have tummy pains that don't get better with paracetamol.

During the daytime, contact your midwife or arrange an urgent same-day GP appointment. Tell the receptionist that you're pregnant and explain that you've been advised to speak urgently to a nurse.

After hours (between 5 pm and 9 am) or if your GP's office or midwife tells you to, go to an after-hours clinic.

### Heavy vaginal bleeding or feeling unwell

You need to see a medical professional at once if you're:

- bleeding enough to soak through a super pad within an hour
- passing large clots
- have a high fever or are feeling faint.

During the daytime, phone your midwife or a nurse at your GP practice. If you can't get an urgent GP appointment at your usual GP practice, go to the emergency department at the hospital.

If it's after hours (between 5 pm and 9 am) go straight away to an after-hours clinic, or to the emergency department at the hospital.

*Written by HealthInfo clinical advisers. Last reviewed December 2021.*