

HCG Monitoring (Human Chorionic Gonadotrophin): What Is It For?

Your ultrasound today has not given a clear answer as to what is happening in your pregnancy. In order to get a better understanding of what is happening, we propose to measure the concentration of HCG (Human Chorionic Gonadotrophin) in your blood over a period of time.

What is HCG?

HCG is a hormone produced in increasingly larger quantities during early pregnancy. By monitoring the level of this hormone in the blood, we can help determine whether your pregnancy is still ongoing.

The test is performed by taking a sample of blood and measuring the level of HCG in it. It may be repeated several times over a period of days/weeks to monitor whether the hormone level rises or falls with time, helping us to give you a clearer picture of what is happening in your pregnancy.

What happens right now?

Once you have had two HCG results (usually 48 hours apart), a member of the team will ring you with your result. You may be asked to return for further assessment and you may need to see a Doctor. Your blood result will be explained to you and you will be advised if and when to return for more blood tests, and/or a repeat scan.

What are the possible outcomes?

There are 3 possible outcomes in this situation:

1. If the concentration of the HCG in your blood rises quickly then this usually signifies a continuing pregnancy. Another scan will be arranged when we will hope to see more clearly how the pregnancy is progressing.
2. If the concentration of the HCG is already low, or goes down quickly then, regrettably, you have probably miscarried. If this happens, the staff will explain this to you and give you further information.
3. If the scan shows an empty uterus and the HCG level is rising, but not substantially, then this could indicate an 'Ectopic' pregnancy and further investigations will be required. You may be asked to return to hospital and may need to stay overnight.

What is an 'Ectopic' Pregnancy?

Ectopic pregnancy is a potentially life-threatening condition, which can affect 1 in 80 pregnancies. It occurs when the fertilised egg implants outside the cavity of the womb. Most ectopic pregnancies develop in the fallopian tube (the tube connecting the ovary to the womb).

As the pregnancy grows, it can cause pain and bleeding and, if not treated quickly enough, it can cause rupture of the tube resulting in severe abdominal bleeding, this is a medical emergency and can be life threatening.

It is important that this condition is resolved as soon as possible without endangering your health but, in the meantime, we are happy to let you remain at home with close monitoring by EGU.

What should I do over the next few days?

Please try to observe the following until we can give you a better idea of what is happening to your pregnancy:

- You must always remain easily contactable and within easy reach of the hospital.
- Working is an individual choice depending how you feel but you should avoid strenuous activity.
- Contact the hospital at once if there is any change in your condition.

What symptoms do I need to look out for?

If you feel unwell in any way or there is a change in your condition you must get in touch with the Emergency Gynaecology Unit (EGU) at once. You should report:

- New or increasing abdominal pain.
- If the bleeding increases.
- Feelings of dizziness, light-headedness, pain in the rectum (your bottom) or pain in the top of the shoulder.

You must get someone to bring you into hospital immediately if you faint or pass out.

Please be aware that there is a possibility of naturally miscarrying a pregnancy at any time, even if we have previously told you that your HCG level has risen well. Please contact the unit if you experience any symptoms discussed above or have any questions.

Who should I contact?

If you have any worries, concerns or symptoms you wish to report, contact:

Emergency Gynaecology Unit (EGU)

(0161) 291 2561 (24 hours)

The EGU is located at Wythenshawe Hospital (enter via entrance 15)

The department operates a telephone triage service, you must call and speak with a specially trained nurse before attending to plan your care

There are no emergency gynae or early pregnancy services at Saint Mary's Hospital, Oxford Road

Early Pregnancy Loss Specialist Nurse

Maxine: (0161) 276 6571 (Monday – Thursday, variable hours – answerphone available)

Counselling Service (confidential)

(0161) 276 4319

(Monday - Friday 8.30 am – 4.30 pm – answerphone available)