

## Information for Patients

# Monitoring your hormone levels in early pregnancy (less than 7 weeks)

## Why am I being monitored?

In order to get a better understanding of what is happening in your pregnancy, we propose to measure the concentration of Human Chorionic Gonadotropin (hCG) hormone in your blood over a period of time.

## What is Human Chorionic Gonadotropin (hCG)?

hCG is a hormone that is only produced in pregnancy, known as the pregnancy hormone. It is 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 on going.

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?

After your blood test you may go home. **Please note; we will not ring and inform you of your first hCG result.** This is because there is such a wide range of what is considered 'normal' in early pregnancy, and the first level alone will not help us to diagnose what is happening in your pregnancy.

The only exceptions to this are:

- a) If your hCG level is negative, (not pregnant), or
- b) It is high enough to perform a scan, in which case the nurse will contact you to arrange this.

Otherwise your first hCG level will be used as a baseline to compare with your next hCG level, which will be taken 48 hours later.

You will receive a telephone call from the nurse once we have the results from your second hCG and have compared it with your first hCG level.

We can then see by how much your level has increased or decreased; this will assist us in determining the outcome of your pregnancy. This telephone call may be on the same day or the day after your blood test.

## What are the possible outcomes?

There are three possible outcomes to your pregnancy:

1. If the concentration of the hCG in your blood rises quickly then this usually signifies a continuing pregnancy. A scan will be arranged when your hCG result is at a level that we would hope to see the signs of an early intra-uterine (in the uterus) pregnancy on an internal vaginal scan.
2. If the level of the hCG result goes down quickly then, regrettably, you have most likely miscarried. If this happens the nurse will explain this to you and give you further information. Unfortunately, nothing can be done to prevent or stop a miscarriage once it has begun.
3. If your hCG level is rising or falling, but not substantially, then this could indicate an ectopic pregnancy and further investigations will be required. You may be asked to return to the unit and you may need to stay overnight.

## What should I do over the next few days?

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

- You must remain easily contactable and within easy reach of the hospital at all times.
- 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.

## Who should I contact?

If you have any worries, concerns or symptoms you wish to report, please 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)