
Intruccion Ectopic pregnancy

Medisch Centrum Kinderwens

No amniotic sac seen on the ultrasound, now what?

Normally, a pregnancy at 6 weeks should be visible as a pregnancy ring in the uterus, and at 7 weeks, an embryo with a heartbeat should be visible. However, sometimes this is not the case and then at an ultrasound you will get bad news and a lot of information. That is why we give you this leaflet so that you can review the things that were discussed afterwards. Of course if you have any questions, we can always schedule a telephone appointment for you.

If an amniotic sac was not seen in the uterus, there could be several reasons:

1. Sometimes the pregnancy is younger than we thought. The pregnancy came about naturally in a woman with an alternating cycle. Often an ultrasound 1-2 weeks later, still shows a good pregnancy. For pregnancies resulting from fertility treatment, we know exactly what the term is.
2. It may be that the pregnancy has not developed further and will lead to an early miscarriage. If development has stopped at a very early stage then we do not even see an amniotic sac in the uterus. Usually, this type of pregnancy ends with a heavy menstrual period.
3. However, it is also possible that the pregnancy has started to grow not inside but outside the uterus, we call this an ectopic pregnancy. Sometimes we see clear characteristics of an ectopic pregnancy and sometimes not. It is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between the situation above and an ectopic pregnancy. A pregnancy that continues to grow outside the uterus can become risky for the mother. More than half of ectopic pregnancies end up spontaneously in a miscarriage.

What is next?

If we immediately see an amniotic sac with an embryo in a different position than the correct one on the first ultrasound, or if there is evidence of bleeding in the stomach, we will refer you to a hospital.

Usually, it is not immediately clear whether we are dealing with a pregnancy inside or outside the uterus. Out of your blood we then determine the level of pregnancy hormone (hCG).

If the hCG level is high enough for a diagnosis, we refer you to a hospital. The gynaecologist at the hospital will discuss the options with you: monitoring and waiting, medication or keyhole surgery.

If the hormone level is not too high and you only have few symptoms, we will keep you under observation. We follow the national guideline. We repeat the ultrasound and blood test every few days and each time we discuss the results with you. If the hCG levels drop and you continue to have no symptoms, we will continue to monitor you until the hCG level is no longer noticeable. This may take several weeks. Each time there will also be an evaluation moment to see if everything is still going well (according to circumstances) and whether a referral is still needed.

What should you pay attention to now?

For very serious symptoms (extreme stomach pain, very heavy vaginal bleeding or fainting) visit an ER or call 911 if needed. Tell the person who answers the phone that you are suspected of having an ectopic pregnancy, this will save time. The chance of all this happening to you is luckily very small.

In case of increasing stomach pain, heavy vaginal bleeding (much more than you are used to during a menstrual period) or if you or your partner are worried, you can visit us 24/7 for consultation. We cannot treat you for an ectopic pregnancy, we must refer you to a hospital for that.

Why isn't everyone referred directly to a hospital to be treated there?

Because most women with an ectopic pregnancy eventually lose pregnancy naturally without any treatment and without serious complications, standard referral and treatment is not necessary. Even in a hospital, much of the treatment can consist of follow-up appointments and waiting. We look and discuss with you on a case-by-case basis how things are going and what is needed for you. If we get close to the point where we can no longer guide you, we will transfer you to a gynaecologist in your area. Of course in this process we also take your personal circumstances into account and possible travel time to the clinic.

Lastly:

The diagnosis or suspicion of an ectopic pregnancy is unpleasant news. You had hoped to be able to have a child and now that wish is not coming true. You are also faced with insecurities and risks. We wish you a lot of strength and we would like to support you. Our team of social workers are available for you, you can make an appointment through our secretariat.

Contact information

You can reach us by phone from Monday till Friday from 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM and from 1:00 PM – 3:30 PM and on Saturdays from 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM on 071-5812300.

On Sundays and holidays we are only available by phone for medical emergency between 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM.

Emergency line outside office hours: 06-25257420