

Vaginal Bleeding During the Second and Third Trimester of Pregnancy

Vaginal bleeding in pregnancy is scary. You may worry about the health of your baby and if you will have a healthy delivery. Over half of all vaginal bleeding during the second and third trimester is a result of abnormalities of the placenta. The information below describes some of the causes of bleeding and what you can do.

What Can Cause Vaginal Bleeding?

Many times the cause cannot be found, but these are the most common causes:

- Vaginal Infections

Vaginal infections can cause the cervix to bleed. Your health care provider will need to do an exam to diagnose an infection. If an infection is the cause of bleeding, you will be given a medication. The medication will treat the infection and the bleeding will stop.

What you can do?

Take all medication as prescribed even if the bleeding has stopped. If any new bleeding occurs, call your health care provider immediately. You should not have intercourse until all medication is completed and it has been more than one week since the bleeding has stopped.

- Labor

For some women, the earliest sign of labor or preterm labor is vaginal bleeding. Your health care provider will need to do an exam to diagnose this.

- Placenta Previa

Placenta previa means the placenta all or partly covers the top of the opening of the cervix (os). It is of a concern because it increases the chance of bleeding throughout your pregnancy and during delivery. It is also a factor in determining how you can safely deliver your baby. Sometimes the placenta moves during the course of the pregnancy. If the placenta remains completely or partially over the opening of the cervix you may need a cesarean section because of the increased risk of bleeding during delivery. An ultrasound is used to diagnose placenta previa. You will be followed closely throughout your pregnancy to determine the placement of the placenta and how you can safely deliver your baby.

What you can do?

If you are diagnosed with placenta previa, you will be given certain activity guidelines to follow until the bleeding stops. Follow these closely. These include pelvic rest (no intercourse and no exercise). Ask your health care provider for additional information if you have questions. If the bleeding increases or you experience any new bleeding, call your health care provider immediately.

- Placental Abruption

A placental abruption occurs when all or part of the placenta comes off the wall of the uterus before the baby is born. The more the placenta comes off the wall the more severe the problem. However, the amount of bleeding can vary significantly with the amount of abruption. An ultrasound will be used to diagnose placenta abruption. How you are treated depends on the severity of the problem.

Signs and symptoms of placental abruption include:

- Extreme abdominal pain.
- Your abdomen is rock hard and does not get soft at any time.
- Decreased or no fetal movement.
- Vaginal bleeding.
- Sudden increase in uterine contractions.

It is important to call your health care provider if you experience these symptoms at any time during your pregnancy. A placental abruption requires immediate medical care.