



Fact Sheet

Blighted Ovum

(anembryonic pregnancy)

Trevor A. Wing

MBRCP MRCHM, MBAcC, BSc, MSc, DMedIm

What is a blighted ovum?

A blighted ovum (also known as “anembryonic pregnancy”) happens when a fertilised egg attaches itself to the uterine wall, but the embryo does not develop. Cells develop to form the pregnancy sac, but not the embryo itself. A blighted ovum usually occurs within the first trimester before a woman knows she is pregnant. A high level of chromosome abnormalities usually causes a woman’s body to naturally miscarry.

How do I know if I am having or have had a blighted ovum?

A blighted ovum can occur very early in pregnancy, before most women even know that they are pregnant. You may experience a missed or late menstrual period, minor abdominal cramps, minor vaginal spotting or bleeding, and a possible positive pregnancy test. As with a normal period, your body may flush the uterine lining but your period may be a little heavier than usual. Many women assume their pregnancies are on track because their hCG levels are increasing. The placenta can continue to grow and support itself without a baby for a short time and pregnancy hormones can continue to rise which would lead a woman to believe she is still pregnant. A diagnosis is usually not made until an ultrasound tests shows either an empty womb or an empty birth sac.

What causes a blighted ovum?

A blighted ovum is the cause of about 50% of first trimester miscarriages and is usually the result of chromosomal problems. A woman’s body recognises abnormal chromosomes in a fetus and naturally does not try to continue the pregnancy because the fetus will not develop into a normal, healthy baby. This can be caused by abnormal cell division, or poor quality sperm or egg.

Should I have a D&C or wait for a natural miscarriage?

This is a decision only you can make for yourself. Most doctors do not recommend a D&C for an early pregnancy loss. It is believed that a woman’s body is capable of passing tissue on its own and there’s no need for an invasive surgical procedure with a risk of complications. A D&C would, however, be beneficial if you were planning on having a pathologist examine the tissues to determine a reason for the miscarriage.

Appointments: 0845 688 5270
Fax: 0208 940 8533
Email: enquiries@naturalgynae.com
www.naturalgynae.com

How can a blighted ovum be prevented?

Unfortunately in most cases, a blighted ovum can not be prevented. Some couples will seek out genetic testing if multiple early pregnancy loss occurs. A blighted ovum is often a one time occurrence and rarely will a women experience more than one. We recommend couples wait at least 2 regular menstrual cycles before trying to conceive again after any type of miscarriage.

Our Female Healthcare Philosophy

At the Women's Natural Health Practice we specialise in providing comprehensive natural gynaecological, obstetric and general female healthcare from adolescence to post-menopause. Our approach is to integrate techniques in both oriental and western medical diagnosis in order to formulate a naturally oriented treatment plan combining herbal medicine, nutritional therapy, acupuncture, exercise and lifestyle. Treatment plans are tailored specifically to each individual woman maximising results.

Please email us at enquiries@naturalgynae.com with questions, we are more than happy to provide any information that will assist you in deciding which treatment approach would be best for you.